



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Residents' Services Select Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Councillor Wayne Bridges (Chair)
Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Darran Davies
Councillor Ekta Gohil
Councillor Scott Farley (Opposition Lead)
Councillor Janet Gardner
Councillor Kamal Preet Kaur

Date: TUESDAY, 14 JANUARY
2025

Time: 7.00 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 5 -
CIVIC CENTRE

**Meeting
Details:** The public and press are welcome
to attend and observe the meeting.

For safety and accessibility, security measures will be conducted, including searches of individuals and their belongings. Attendees must also provide satisfactory proof of identity upon arrival. Refusal to comply with these requirements will result in non-admittance.

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Contact: Liz Penny, Democratic Services
Officer

Email: epenny@hillington.gov.uk

Lloyd White
Head of Democratic Services
London Borough of Hillingdon,
3E/05, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW
www.hillingdon.gov.uk

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Terms of Reference

Residents' Services Select Committee

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

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas	
Cabinet Member for Community & Environment	Place	Green Spaces (incl. Woodlands, Colne Valley)	
		Crematorium Services	
		Waste Services	
		Flooding & watercourses	
		Environmental Projects (incl. Chrysalis, Street Champions, Alleygating & Ward Budgets)	
		Climate Change (incl. air quality) – cross-cutting brief	
		Homes and Communities	Library Services
			Theatres, Museums & Cultural Services
			Leisure Services and Centres
			Community Safety & Community Cohesion (incl. CCTV)
			Trading Standards, Environmental Health & Licensing (incl. Safety of Sports Grounds)
			Imported Food Office
			Anti-Social Behaviour and Localities
		Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing & Growth	Place
Parking & Parking Enforcement			
Emergency Response			
Adult Services & Health	Mortuary		
	Planning Services (incl. planning policy, building control, planning enforcement, specialist planning & conservation areas)		
	Regeneration (incl. town centres, master planning)		
	Economic Development (incl. growth strategy, business engagement, inward investment & worklessness)		
Homes & Communities	Homes & Communities		
		Local Impacts of High Speed 2 (cross-cutting brief)	
		Housing Strategy & Commissioning (incl. housing policies & standards, assessment of housing stock size & condition and the	

		commissioning of housing stock repairs and housing stock acquisitions)
		HRA Strategy and delivery plan (operational delivery in Place and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Property)
		Housing Management (incl. tenancy management)
		Housing Options and Homeless Prevention
		Private Sector Housing

STATUTORY COMMITTEE	<u>Statutory Crime and Disorder Scrutiny</u>
	<p>This Committee will act as a Crime and Disorder Committee as defined in the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 and carry out the bi-annual scrutiny of decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.</p> <p><u>Duty of partners to attend and provide information</u></p> <p>The Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 permits this Select Committee to make a request in writing for information to bodies who form the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (Safer Hillingdon Partnership), which includes the Police. The Committee should scrutinise the work of the partnership at least once a year and may also require the attendance before it of an officer or employee of a responsible authority or of a co-operating person or body in order to answer questions. The Committee may not require a person to attend unless reasonable notice of the intended date of attendance has been given to that person.</p>

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of interest in matters coming before this meeting
- 3 To receive the minutes of the previous meeting 1 - 8
- 4 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

Part I - Members, Public and Press

- 5 Select Committee Terms of Reference Update 9 - 16
- 6 2025/26 Budget Proposals for Services within the Remit of the Residents' Services Select Committee 17 - 36
- 7 Review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey - Review Findings 37 - 76
- 8 Forward Plan 77 - 86
- 9 Work Programme 87 - 90

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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 at 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.

UPDATED SELECT COMMITTEE REMITS

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A - Updated Select Committee remits
Ward	All

HEADLINES

Following the recent Council meeting, approval was given to update the Select Committees' remits to reflect the new Cabinet portfolios and Directorates. The service areas previously scrutinised remain the same, but their descriptions have been updated for improved clarity and accountability.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note its updated remit

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Following the amendments to the Cabinet portfolios and Directorates, the remits of the Select Committees have been updated for improved clarity and accountability.

PERFORMANCE DATA

N/A.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

This change will allow improved oversight by each of the Select Committees of services within their areas.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Changes to the Constitution to update the committee's terms of reference were delegated to the Head of Democratic Services by the Council meeting on 28 November.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Updated Select Committee remits

Corporate Resources & Infrastructure Select Committee

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas
Leader of the Council	Corporate Services	Communications & Engagement
		Governance
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Property	Corporate Services	Democratic Services
		Human Resources, including Health & Safety
		Legal Services
	Place	Capital Programme & Major Construction Projects
		Property (incl. estates, new housing supply (acquisitions and new build), disposals and maximising income from holdings)
		Building Safety
		Facilities Management
		Repairs & Engineering of Corporate Property, Housing & Assets (contractual & delivery), including the delivery of the planned capital programme for housing
		Civic Centre, Property and built assets (cross-cutting brief)
		Highways (operational maintenance delivery)
		Utility companies in the Borough (cross-cutting)
Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing & Growth	Place	Highways (incl. Highways strategic assessment & safety, Highways Policy and infrastructure including EV)
		Transportation (incl. road safety, traffic management and parking management schemes)
Cabinet Member for Finance & Transformation	Finance	All Finance (inc. school budgets, revenues and benefits, HRA)
		Statutory Accounting, Investments and Pensions
		Procurement and Commissioning (incl. fleet and energy)
		Counter Fraud
		Internal Audit & Risk Assurance (incl. risk management)

	Corporate Services Directorate	Council transformation & Hillingdon Improvement Programme
		Technology, Digital, Information Governance, Business Intelligence, Customer Experience and Business Support (incl. implementation of automation software)
		Complaints – “Member Responsible for Complaints” under Ombudsman Codes
Cabinet Member for Community & Environment	Homes & Communities	Emergency Response
All portfolios		Resident Experience (cross-cutting brief)
		Strategic Partnerships (cross-cutting brief)

Children, Families & Education Select Committee

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas
Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	Children’s Services	Children's Social Care (incl. safeguarding & corporate parenting)
		Corporate Parenting Panel
		Prevention & Youth Justice (incl. youth services, stronger families and adolescent mental health)
		Education & SEND (incl. Adult & Community Learning, Skills, Lifelong Learning, Music Services and School Travel)
	Adult Services & Health	Children and Families Support Services (incl. Early Years and Children's Centres)

Health & Social Care Select Committee

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas
Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care	Adult Services & Health	Adult Social Work (incl. Direct Care and Business Delivery, Provider & Commissioned Care)
		Adult Safeguarding
		Hospital & Localities
		Adult Learning Disabilities & Mental Health
		Adult Social Services transport and travel

		Health & Public Health (incl. health partnerships, health inequalities & Health Control Unit at Heathrow)
		Health integration / Voluntary Sector
	Homes & Communities	The Council's Domestic Abuse services and support (cross-cutting)
		Services to asylum seekers

STATUTORY COMMITTEE	<p><u>Statutory Healthy Scrutiny</u></p> <p>This Committee will also undertake the powers of health scrutiny conferred by the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013. It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work closely with the Health & Wellbeing Board & Local HealthWatch in respect of reviewing and scrutinising local health priorities and inequalities. • Respond to any relevant NHS consultations. <p><u>Duty of partners to attend and provide information</u></p> <p>The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013, imposes duties on 'responsible persons' to provide a local authority with such information about the planning, provision and operation of health services in the area of the authority as it may reasonably require to discharge its health scrutiny functions through the Health & Social Care Select Committee. All relevant NHS bodies and health service providers (including GP practices and other primary care providers and any private, independent or third sector providers delivering services under arrangements made by clinical commissioning groups, NHS England or the local authority) have a duty to provide such information. Additionally, Members and employees of a relevant NHS body or relevant health service provider have a duty to attend before a local authority when required by it (provided reasonable notice has been given) to answer questions the local authority believes are necessary to carry out its health scrutiny functions. Further guidance is available from the Department of Health on information requests and attendance of individuals at meetings considering health scrutiny.</p>
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Residents' Services Select Committee

Portfolio(s)	Directorate	Service Areas
Cabinet Member for Community & Environment	Place	Green Spaces (incl. Woodlands, Colne Valley)
		Crematorium Services
		Waste Services
		Flooding & watercourses
		Environmental Projects (incl. Chrysalis, Street Champions, Alleygating & Ward Budgets)
		Climate Change (incl. air quality) – cross-cutting brief
	Homes and Communities	Library Services
		Theatres, Museums & Cultural Services
		Leisure Services and Centres
		Community Safety & Community Cohesion (incl. CCTV)
		Trading Standards, Environmental Health & Licensing (incl. Safety of Sports Grounds)
		Imported Food Office
		Anti-Social Behaviour and Localities
		Street Scene Enforcement
		Parking & Parking Enforcement
		Emergency Response
	Adult Services & Health	Mortuary
Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing & Growth	Place	Planning Services (incl. planning policy, building control, planning enforcement, specialist planning & conservation areas)
		Regeneration (incl. town centres, master planning)
		Economic Development (incl. growth strategy, business engagement, inward investment & worklessness)
		Local Impacts of Heathrow Expansion (cross cutting brief)
		Local Impacts of High Speed 2 (cross-cutting brief)

	Homes & Communities	Housing Strategy & Commissioning (incl. housing policies & standards, assessment of housing stock size & condition and the commissioning of housing stock repairs and housing stock acquisitions)
		HRA Strategy and delivery plan (operational delivery in Place and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Property)
		Housing Management (incl. tenancy management)
		Housing Options and Homeless Prevention
		Private Sector Housing

STATUTORY COMMITTEE	<p><u>Statutory Crime and Disorder Scrutiny</u></p> <p>This Committee will act as a Crime and Disorder Committee as defined in the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 and carry out the bi-annual scrutiny of decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.</p> <p><u>Duty of partners to attend and provide information</u></p> <p>The Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 permits this Select Committee to make a request in writing for information to bodies who form the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (Safer Hillingdon Partnership), which includes the Police. The Committee should scrutinise the work of the partnership at least once a year and may also require the attendance before it of an officer or employee of a responsible authority or of a co-operating person or body in order to answer questions. The Committee may not require a person to attend unless reasonable notice of the intended date of attendance has been given to that person.</p>
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2025/26 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF THE RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Andy Goodwin, Head of Strategic Finance Richard Ennis, Corporate Director of Finance
Papers with report	Residents' Services Savings Appendix
Ward	All

HEADLINES

1. To comply with the Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules as part of the agreed consultation process for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets, alongside the Council's Capital Programme, this report sets out the draft revenue budget and Capital Programme for the services within the remit of the Residents' Services Select Committee. Following consideration by Cabinet on 12 December 2024, these proposals are now under consultation, and the relevant proposals being discussed at the January cycle of the Select Committees.
2. Cabinet will next consider the budget proposals on 13 February 2025, and the report will include comments received from Select Committees. At the meeting on 13 February 2025 Cabinet will make recommendations to full Council regarding the budget and Council Tax levels for 2025/26. Subsequently, Council will then meet to agree the budgets and Council Tax for 2025/26 on 27 February 2025.
3. The Committee needs to consider the budget proposals as they relate to the relevant service areas within the corresponding Cabinet Portfolios, but within the corporate context and the constraints applying as a result of the aggregate financial position of the authority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. **That the Committee:**
 - a. **Notes the budget projections contained in the report; and**
 - b. **Comments as appropriate on the combined budget proposals affecting the relevant service areas within the corresponding Cabinet Portfolios, in the context of the corporate budgetary position.**

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

General Fund Budget

Executive Summary

5. The Council aims to set a balance budget for 2025/26, with the Consultation Budget presented to Cabinet in December presenting a requirement to drawdown £6.4m of reserves to achieve this, with further focus on the period to 2029/30, with this report setting out in the appendices, published alongside the consultation budget, a 5-year budget strategy. In this setting this medium-term financial strategy, the objectives are:
 - i. To continue to drive value for money for our residents in our services;
 - ii. To continue to be a low Council Tax charging borough;
 - iii. To review our operating model to deliver even more efficient and effective services and make significant savings;
 - iv. To invest in new assets for the borough, building out our infrastructure and seeking invest to save opportunities through our capital programme;
 - v. To invest in improving the quality of our homes for our housing residents;
 - vi. To increase our income levels and charge appropriate levels of fees;
 - vii. To continue to respond to inadequate levels of Government funding including lobbying central Government and the GLA for more funding for our residents;
and
 - viii. Rebuilding our financial resilience
6. These are financially challenging times for local authorities to deal with, and respond, to a number of significant national pressures, within a significantly reduced funding envelope. Particular pressures for Hillingdon include the increased cost of adult social care, children's placements, homelessness, asylum seekers and ensuring it has an experienced workforce to deliver the best services it can to its residents.
7. The Council will continue to lobby national Government and the Greater London Authority [GLA] for increases in funding to deal with particular issues to us, such as the impacts of being a port authority.

Budget Strategy

8. Budget proposals for 2025/26 have been prepared in the context of a wider strategy addressing the five-year MTFS period through which service expenditure is to be managed within available resources in the context of a challenging economic environment in terms of ongoing exceptional demand for Homelessness Support, Social Care and legacy impacts from periods of high inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic. To balance the budget, the Council has a number of mechanisms at its disposal to deliver this including a combination of:

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- Options the Council has used in this budget strategy:
 - Increased net savings (reducing expenditure and maximising income);
 - Council Tax policy (within Referendum Thresholds); and
 - Release funding from reserves.

 - Options the Council is not pursuing:
 - Seek Secretary of State approval for an increase in Council Tax above the Referendum Threshold;
 - Hold a Referendum to ask the Residents to support a Council Tax increase above the Referendum Threshold; and/or
 - Seek Secretary of State approval for Exceptional Financial Support [EFS] through a Capitalisation Direction, which is effectively a loan to the Council that is required to be repaid (potentially with extra interest charges) but gives an authority more time to identify and implement measures that close the budget gap.
9. This budget strategy is based upon the Council's financial challenges including high demand for services, ongoing national issues and reduced Government funding since the austerity measures began in 2013/14, in a Council that has relatively low reserves compared to London neighbours. The latest monitoring position for the 2024/25 financial year reporting a net overspend of £8.9m which will leave uncommitted General Balances at £26.2m entering the 2025/26 financial year.
10. The Month 7 monitoring position for the services within this select committee present a net variance of £8.6m overspend as presented in the table below:

Table 1: Service Operating Budgets

Service		Approved Budget	Underlying Forecast	Earmarked Reserves	Transformation Capitalisation	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Month 6	Movement
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Children, Families & Education	Expenditure	98.6	106.8	0.0	(4.1)	102.7	4.1	4.1	0.0
	Income	(23.3)	(24.4)	0.0	0.0	(24.4)	(1.1)	(1.1)	0.0
	Subtotal	75.3	82.4	0.0	(4.1)	78.3	3.0	3.0	0.0
Corporate Resources & Infrastructure	Expenditure	191.6	192.3	(0.2)	(3.4)	188.7	(2.9)	(3.0)	0.1
	Income	(118.2)	(118.0)	0.0	0.0	(118.0)	0.2	0.3	(0.1)
	Subtotal	73.4	74.3	(0.2)	(3.4)	70.7	(2.7)	(2.7)	0.0
Residents' Services	Expenditure	84.8	104.1	(0.8)	(0.5)	102.8	18.0	15.9	2.1
	Income	(47.1)	(56.6)	0.1	0.0	(56.5)	(9.4)	(9.4)	0.0
	Subtotal	37.7	47.5	(0.7)	(0.5)	46.3	8.6	6.5	2.1
Health & Social Care	Expenditure	160.1	169.8	0.0	(0.5)	169.3	9.2	9.1	0.1
	Income	(50.3)	(55.1)	(0.3)	0.0	(55.4)	(5.1)	(4.9)	(0.2)
	Subtotal	109.8	114.7	(0.3)	(0.5)	113.9	4.1	4.2	(0.1)
Total Service Operating Budgets		296.2	318.9	(1.2)	(8.5)	309.2	13.0	11.0	2.0

11. With the following narrative setting out the variances and movement from Month 6 on an exception basis:

a. **Residents' Services** – An underlying overspend of £8.6m with this position being driven largely by homelessness demand outstripping the level of demographic growth built into the service area in the budget strategy, with £6.2m of the pressure relating to homelessness support and driving £1.5m of the adverse movement. The majority of the remaining pressure is being driven by the Community Safety service, with this largely being the impact of changes in relation to imported food as a result of ongoing Brexit impacts. Waste Services are experiencing increased demand equating to a £0.6m pressures for the service, with this service accounting for the remaining balance of the adverse movement due to the income from the West London Waste Authority in respect of energy no longer expected to be received in 2024/25.

12. The savings requirement for 2024/25 is £15.8m as set out in the Council's budget strategy, this position has been supplemented by a further £5.7m of prior year savings carried forward into 2024/25, resulting in an overall programme of £21.5m savings being delivered in year:

Table 2: Savings Tracker

Cabinet Member Portfolio	Blue Banked £'000	Green Delivery in progress £'000	Amber I Early stages of delivery £'000	Amber II Potential problems in delivery £'000	Red Serious problems in delivery £'000	Total £'000
Children, Families & Education	(0.3)	(0.6)	(0.3)	(0.2)	(0.3)	(1.7)
Corporate Resources & Infrastructure	(0.4)	(3.3)	(0.3)	(0.5)	(0.4)	(4.9)
Residents' Services	(0.2)	(1.9)	(0.7)	0.0	(0.9)	(3.7)
Health & Social Care	(0.1)	(1.2)	(0.2)	0.0	0.0	(1.5)
Cross-Cutting	0.0	0.0	(6.1)	0.0	(3.6)	(9.7)
Total 2024/25 Savings Programme	(1.0) 5%	(7.0) 33%	(7.6) 35%	(0.7) 3%	(5.2) 24%	(21.5) 100%

13. Based on 2.99% per annum increases in the core Council Tax and 2% per annum increases in the Social Care Precept for 2025/26 and throughout the life of the MTFs, funding available to support service expenditure is projected to grow by £49.2m to £333.8m between 2024/25 and 2029/30. A combination of exceptional demand pressures within Social Care and Homelessness support, together with capital investment plans is projected to generate a £111.4m uplift in service expenditure across the five-year term. In order to address this differential, to date, a savings programme of £65.2m has been developed, leaving a residual budget gap of £3.1m across the five-year MTF period, with £32.6m of savings being proposed for 2025/26 increasing throughout the later years of the MTF period.

Table 3: Budget Strategy

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Total Resources	284.5	299.8	305.5	315.1	325.2	333.8
Total Service Expenditure	284.5	306.2	303.7	312.9	322.2	330.7
(Surplus)/Deficit	0.0	6.4	(1.8)	(2.2)	(3.0)	(3.1)
Select Committee Spend:						
Children, Families & Education	60.2	57.8	57.4	57.1	58.8	60.6
Corporate Resources & Infrastructure	73.0	74.1	79.2	82.5	87.3	91.4
Residents' Services	38.1	42.0	42.3	43.2	44.9	46.6
Health & Social Care	125.4	127.3	131.6	138.6	144.7	150.6
Corporate Budgets	(12.2)	5.0	(6.8)	(8.5)	(13.5)	(18.5)
Total Service Expenditure	284.5	306.2	303.7	312.9	322.2	330.7

14. As is the case for the vast majority of local authorities, the Council has experienced exceptional demand for homelessness support and social care against the backdrop of the country exiting a period of high inflation, which is having a significant impact on the cost of providing services to residents, with Government funding no longer keeping pace with the increased expenditure the Council is facing. Furthermore, the Council has carried out a rebasing exercise that adjusted for legacy budget issues, adding £14.1m to the 2025/26 saving requirement, with a further £6.4m of legacy unallocated savings being written out.
15. The Autumn Statement announced in parliament on 30 October 2024 announced increased funding for Social Care and Homelessness, as well as an overall increase in funding for Local Authorities. The statement also confirmed that the public sector will receive compensation against the changes in employers National Insurance against the Council's own workforce. These elements have been estimated in the Council's budget strategy to yield an additional £3.9m, with this sum to be firmed up in the Provisional Local Government Settlement expected in the third week of December 2024 or subsequently in the Final Settlement due at the end of January 2025.

Risk Management

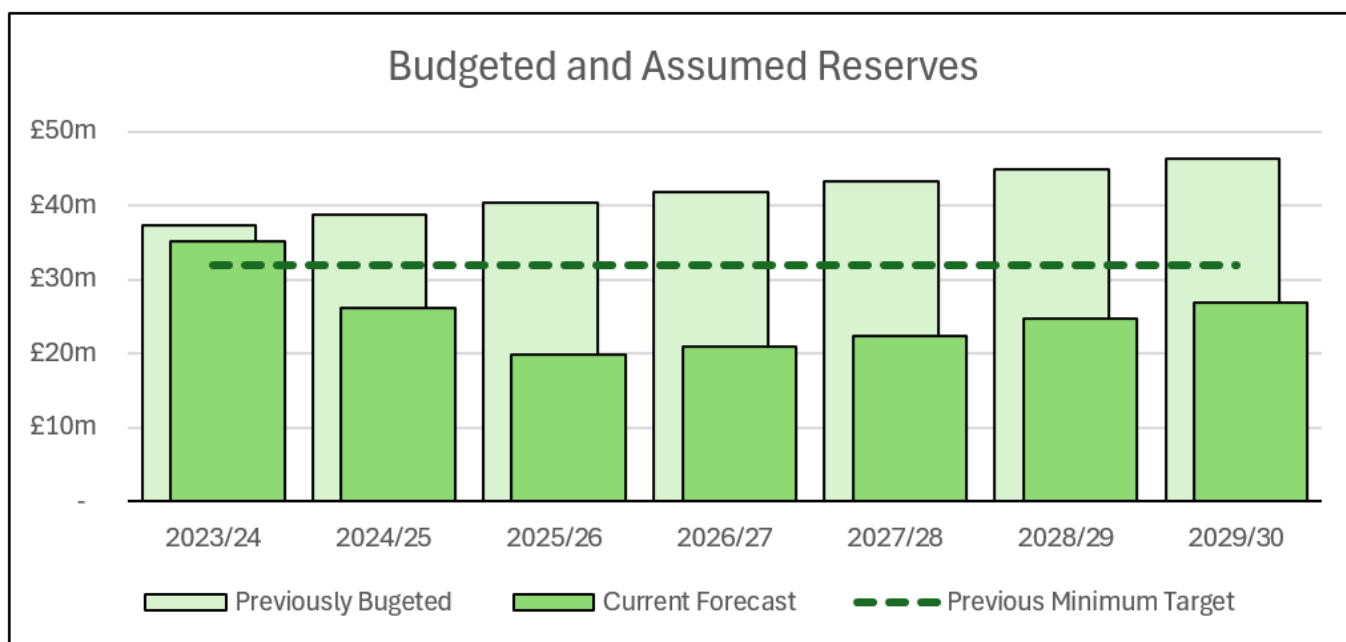
16. The draft budget set out in this report includes a number of savings that are in early stages of development, and which need to be thoroughly refined and progressed over the coming months ahead of and during the early part of 2025/26. This is the case for all savings proposals and in particular, for the Target Operating Model saving line (£5m in 2025/26, rising to £15m in 2026/27 and a further £5m in both 2028/29 and 2029/30). They will need a laser focus on planning and delivery and where needed additional capacity and expert capability added to our existing teams. Risk awareness, management and mitigations will have a heightened importance over the course of the remainder of this financial year and onwards to maintain a robust budget with adequate reserves to mitigate for any further adverse financial developments or non-delivery of assumed savings.

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17. Council approved the 2024/25 Budget and MTFs and recognised the need to replenish reserves, then estimated to total £37.3m at the start of the current year and then grow by £1.5m per year to total £44.8m by the end of 2028/29. This rebuilding in reserves was consistent with the then Director of Finance written opinion that between a minimum of £32m up to a maximum £55m was necessary given the financial risks facing the Council. The position on the expectation on reserves will be revisited ahead of the February budget considering our prevailing financial position.
18. Some of the risks identified in (or unforeseen at the time of) the current year budget being set in February 2024 have materialised and as such our latest revenue monitoring position reflects closing general and available earmarked reserves falling to £26.2m against a previously anticipated £38.8m. This change from previous assumptions helps illustrate the need to hold adequate levels of reserves against such events.
19. The Council has not needed to request Exceptional Financial Support [EFS] from Government and is working hard to resolve its own financial pressures. Given the pressures and scale of financial savings officers will ensure that the Cabinet and Council are regularly updated in this respect. Our financial position is very challenging and whilst this is a national issue and systematic failure and not a uniquely Hillingdon problem, it is the Council's responsibility to ensure strong financial management to avoid this risk crystallising. If the savings are not delivered in broad terms EFS cannot be ruled out as is the case with many boroughs.
20. The Cabinet have given a clear steer to officers that they wish to resolve as much as possible the financial issues facing the borough, with our own efficiencies and savings programme. Exceptional Financial Support through borrowing as viewed by many as a 'sticking plaster' that does not resolve the underlying reductions and lack of funding for Hillingdon and Local Government as a whole. EFS, increases the cost to the tax payer, through additional borrowing costs, unless funded through additional capital receipts to a large extent.
21. Reference to the summary budget position set out in Section 6 of this report shows anticipated levels of future reserves based on the budget assumptions set out in this report and is summarised below:

Chart 11: Budgeted and Assumed Levels of Reserves



22. Having low levels of reserves to mitigate future potential risk is a significant risk in itself and ultimately could lead to the issuing of a s114 Notice leading to an immediate cessation of all non-essential spend and raising the possibility of Government intervention
23. The budget as it currently stands contains a significant degree of risk in its assumptions, and in particular the following:
 - i. Declining and the slow rebuild of general and earmarked reserve levels;
 - ii. Significant and the largest savings programme put forward to be delivered and will require stringent monitoring to ensure delivery and any optimism bias removed;
 - iii. Further potential demand pressures that may arise – particularly around social care costs and temporary accommodation pressures;
 - iv. Macro-economic headwinds including inflation, interest rates and pressures that could further arise as the result of any downturn in the general economy;
 - v. Future Government funding levels being maintained in real terms – especially if the government’s growth agenda to re-balance public finances fails to deliver as planned;
 - vi. Changes to the business rates system further increasing cost of occupying the Council’s larger buildings or indirectly through our partners on the running cost of leisure centres;

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- vii. Whilst a fundamental review of the local government finance system has again been promised, any rebasing has the potential for the Council to lose the gains from growth above baseline already accumulated since 2013/14; and
- viii. The Council has a significant Dedicated Schools Grant deficit which is currently held on the Balance Sheet but not impacting on the level of general reserves. Should the statutory over-ride preventing it from affecting general reserves be withdrawn this would result in general reserves being negative

24. Any delay in the timeframes for the delivery of assumed savings (or their quantum) has the potential to adversely impact on the forecast level of future reserves. To date, a significant number of savings proposals remain to have a full delivery programme validated to provide necessary assurance

Budget Proposals for the Residents' Services Select Committee

25. Service expenditure will grow due to inflationary pressures, demand-led growth and other corporate items including capital financing costs. The below table sets out the impact of these expenditure movements across the services within the remit of this Select Committee for 2024/25.

Table 4: Service Expenditure Budget Proposals

	2024/25	Inflation	Demand-led Growth	Corporate Items	Savings Proposals	2025/26
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Children, Families & Education	60.2	2.4	0.4	0.0	(5.2)	57.8
Corporate Resources & Infrastructure	73.0	2.8	0.0	5.3	(7.0)	74.1
Residents' Services	38.1	2.8	7.7	0.0	(6.6)	42.0
Health & Social Care	125.4	3.0	4.2	2.5	(7.8)	127.3
Corporate Budgets	(12.2)	(6.3)	0.0	29.5	(6.0)	5.0
Total Service Expenditure	284.5	4.7	12.3	37.3	(32.6)	306.2

26. Inflation: Cost pressures of £2.8m are projected against 2024/25 expenditure going into 2025/26, with material uplifts in relation to workforce budgets, contracted expenditure and energy costs. In line with wider MTFs modelling, inflation projections are predicated on contracted expenditure uplifts for 2025/26 being in line with September's CPI figure of 1.7% in line with the Government's approach to use this index to uplift funding and expenditure across many areas of the public sector, with latter years forecast to be in line with the Bank of England's target rate of 2% per annum. The 2024/25 pay award has been agreed below the Council's assumptions at the time of setting the 2024/25 budget, with the MTFs including

an assumption that the pay award is 3% in 2025/26, also reducing to 2% per annum thereafter.

27. Demand-Led Growth: items within the remit of this Select Committee account for £7.7m of the £12.3m increase across the Council for 2025/26, with a breakdown of these items presented below.
- a. Waste Disposal Levy & Contracts are forecast to increase by £1.7m in 2025/26, rising by a further £2.6m per annum to 2029/30 with the additional pressure in 2025/26 providing a mechanism to fund the additional pressures in 2024/25 due to West London Waste Authority (WLWA) Levy costs from residual tonnages being the key element for the in-year pressure.
 - b. Homelessness Prevention is currently facing exceptional demand, with the in-year monitoring position reporting an overspend of £5.0m, with the increase in the budget strategy affectively funding the additional growth that is in the system, with savings included later in this report that set out the Council's mitigating actions to address this pressure going forward. Homelessness support is a national issue and is forecast to generate an overspend of £170m across London in 2024/25.
 - c. Private Sector Housing require an investment of £0.4m in 2025/26 due to increasing statutory responsibilities, with the service unable to meet these without additional resource, with the service under increasing pressure due to inspections, including unlicensed HMOs in the borough, with the service generating income from fines that partially offsets the cost of the service.
28. Corporate Items: there are no Corporate Items within the remit of this Select Committee , with the £37.3m increase across the Council in 2025/26 impacting on other areas.

Savings Proposals

29. As mentioned above, £32.6m of savings proposals have been incorporated into the draft budget for 2025/26, with £6.6m falling within the remit of this Select Committee. Details of the savings programme propels within the remit of this Select Committee are discussed below, with a full list available included in Appendix A6 to this report, in line with the appendix presented with the Consultation Budget presented at December Cabinet.
30. Residents Services proposals for 2025/26 total £6.6m, increasing to £8.5m by 2027/28, with savings proposals in this portfolio including:
- i. Proposed measures to mitigate against rising Homelessness support totalling £3.6m are included for 2025/26, rising to £5.1m by 2027/28, offsetting the Demand-Led Growth proposal reported on earlier in this report. The mitigating

actions include finding alternative low-cost interventions, exploring procurement opportunities in the B&B market leasing additional accommodation.

- ii. Measure to increase income account for £1.4m in 2025/26, rising to £1.7m by 2027/28, with proposals including the introduction of parking charges on Sundays where charges currently don't exist, an increase in the parking fine banding level and reducing the discount offered to residents through the Hillingdon First Card but still maintaining a substantial discount, with total parking measures securing £1.1m in 2025/26. These proposals will be carefully monitored to assess any impact on total revenue from elasticity of supply. Other income measures include Building Control and Planning fees yielding an additional £0.4m in 2025/26.
- iii. Other saving measures include the removal of the Beck Theatre subsidy, securing sponsorship for Christmas Lights and a review of the Out of Hours Noise Nuisance Service, with these three items forecast to deliver £0.6m in 2025/26.
- iv. The remaining £1.0m of proposals come from a number of smaller updates, with full details set out in the Savings Appendix (A6).

31. Target Operating Model A full review of the Council's Target Operating Model to identify and deliver a further £5.0m saving in 2025/26, rising by a further £10.0m in 2026/27 to a total of £15.0m, with a further £5.0m in each of the last two financial years of the budget strategy, with a full review of every service and how it operates, building on the work that started in the Zero-Based Budgeting reviews that set the groundwork for this budget strategy. The delivery of target Operating Model savings are essential for the financial future of this Council.

32. Cross-Cutting Initiatives proposals amount to £6.0m in 2025/26, rising by a further £13.5m over the next two years to deliver £19.5m of savings by 2027/28. Savings recorded as cross-cutting include:

- i. Procurement savings of £0.6m are included in each of the three years, with the procurement service to work with service areas during contract negotiations and tender exercises to maximise opportunities for the Council and effectively counter the impact of the inflationary uplift built into the budget strategy.
- ii. Pension measures of £0.4m are included for 2025/26, rising by a further £0.1m in 2025/26 from a combination of cashflow measures with the interactions between the General Fund and Pension Fund (£0.3m) and a proposal to delay automatic enrolment for new starters into the pension scheme until post-probation (£0.1m in 2025/26, £0.2m by 2026/27).
- iii. Finally, inflationary uplifts to Fees & Charges from 2026/27 onwards are included under cross-cutting items at £1.1m per annum to 2027/28, with the impact of uplifts for 2025/26 included under each portfolio.

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33. The increases in Fees & Charges is shown in Appendix C and maintains significant discounts for residents. Further work will be undertaken ahead of the February Cabinet to test any impact caused by the elasticity of demand.

Capital Proposals

34. Capital investment of £301.6m over the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 has been incorporated into the wider General Fund budget strategy set out within this report, with £134.1m investment in major projects, primarily delivering new or expanded infrastructure, and £157.5m investment in recurrent programme of works, ensuring that existing infrastructure is maintained and improved, with further detail available in Appendix A8 that accompanied the Consultation Budget Report presented at December Cabinet.

Table 5: General Fund Capital Programme by Cabinet Portfolio

	Major Projects £'000	Programme of Works £'000	General Contingency	Total £'000
Total Capital Programme	174.1	157.5	10.0	341.6
Select Committee Breakdown:				
Children, Families & Education	11.3	2.3	0.0	13.6
Corporate Resources & Infrastructure	129.7	132.4	10.0	272.1
Residents' Services	8.6	8.5	0.0	17.1
Health & Social Care	24.5	14.3	0.0	38.8
Total Capital Programme	174.1	157.5	10.0	341.6

35. Further to the overview presented above, the below section sets out the Capital Proposals within the remit of this Select Committee.
36. **Residents' Services** – An investment of £17.1m is included for this portfolio, with a proposed Major Projects budget of £8.6m, including £7.5m investment in Green Spaces equipment, with this proposal linked to reducing revenue expenditure within the Green Spaces service by investing in equipment to reduce day-to-day running costs. A further £1.6m is included for the investment of Shopping Parades supporting local commercial activity in the borough. The £8.5m Programme of Works budget mainly supports the Chrysalis Programme (£7.5m) and Playground Replacement (£1.0m).

Housing Revenue Account

Background

37. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ringfenced, self-financing account whereby rental income from the Council's c10,000 social housing units are reinvested in the management, maintenance and expansion of stock for the benefit for tenants. The budget strategy for the HRA for the 2025/26 financial year in the context of the five year's is set out in this report,

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underpinned by a 30-Year Business Plan, which demonstrates that over the longer term the HRA is financially sustainable and that proposed capital investment will maintain this position.

38. The HRA Capital Programme that forms part of the budget strategy is structured around four key elements:
- i. Housing Supply – delivering a net 209 new homes in 2025/26, with a further 1,460 by 2029/30 to support increasing demand for social housing in a growing borough.
 - ii. Recognising the impact of the Autumn Statement announcement on the Right to Buy Scheme, where the Government has reduced the discount to Council Tenants from £136.4k to £16k for all applications received after 21 November 2024. As a result, the Council saw a spike in demand in October from an average of 3 per month to over 300 applications (not all applications will lead to finalised sales).
 - iii. Estate Regeneration – delivery of 370 new homes across the Avondale and Hayes Town Centre estates, a net increase of 72 during the MTFS period on the current configuration.
 - iv. Sdf Works to Stock – an enhanced programme of works to take into account early indicative results of a Housing Stock review, anticipating 30% of the Housing Stock to require further work to meet decency standard, with further investment to ensure that properties are refreshed on a rolling programme.
39. Development of HRA budgets over the five-year has been undertaken in the context of significant pressures on housing demand in the borough, across London and nationally, which is being compounded by the relatively high proportion of construction and building-related expenditure to meet housing regulatory requirements and to increase housing supply. The Government continue to cap rent increases at CPI+1% for 2025/26, with the Government consulting on extending this arrangement to the end of this MTFS period with the Government set to confirm this before the Council finalises the 2025/26 budgets, with any update to be brought to Cabinet in February 2025.
40. The Council increased the revenue budgets for managing the HRA in 2024/25 with a growth item of £1.5m to fund additional regulatory requirements (£0.5m) and ongoing maintenance and remedial work (£1.0m), with this increase proving to be sufficient in-year and beyond.
41. Forward looking financial plans are based on solid foundations, with a forecast balanced budget for 2024/25 and unallocated reserves projected to total £15.0m at 31 March 2025. Given that £15.0m reserves are judged to provide sufficient capacity for risk management purposes and considering the economic context, the budget strategy maintains unallocated reserves at the target level. The Council will be reviewing the level of reserves in the future given the rising stock number over the medium-term.

Table 12: Housing Revenue Account Budget Strategy

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Total Resources	74.3	78.8	84.9	91.0	95.0	98.1
Total Service Expenditure	49.2	59.6	65.3	69.4	75.3	78.4
Contribution to Finance Capital Programme	25.2	19.2	19.6	21.6	19.7	19.7
Cumulative Budget Gap	(0.1)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Closing General Balances	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0

42. Capital investment plans will result in the HRA Capital Financing Requirement reaching £496m in 2029/30, with both the budget strategy and 30 Year Business Plan demonstrating that the ongoing servicing and repayment of this level of borrowing is sustainable.
43. Further commentary on the HRA budget strategy is provided below, with detailed schedules included in Appendix B to the December Cabinet Consultation Budget.

RENTAL INCOME

44. HRA Dwelling Rental Income is projected to grow from £74.2m in 2024/25 to £98.0m by 2028/29, with this £23.8m increase in funding driven by a combination of inflationary rent increases and net growth of 1,669 dwellings as investment in delivery of new stock outstrips projected losses through Right to Buy sales and the Hayes Estates Regeneration Scheme properties come into operation.
45. As part of the Autumn Statement, the Government established a 1%+CPI rent increase for 2025/26 with future years expected to be confirmed by Government before the Council finalises its budget in February 2024, this budget strategy therefore takes a prudent approach of maintaining increases from 2026/27 onwards at CPI, with the expectation the additional 1% will be announced shortly.
46. The table below provides an overview of projected changes in stock numbers, with new units being delivered through the capital investment plans expanded upon later in this report while units are sold under Right to Buy.

Table 13: HRA Stock Numbers

Tenanted Stock	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Change
Projected Opening Stock	10,228	10,438	10,647	10,860	11,633	11,949	N/A
Net Movement*	210	209	213	773	316	158	1,669
Projected Closing Stock	10,438	10,647	10,860	11,633	11,949	12,107	1,669
Projected Average Stock	10,333	10,543	10,754	11,247	11,791	12,028	n/a

*The net movement includes: right-to-buy sales; new units and regeneration voids – updated and full details will be provided in the February 2025 Cabinet report

INFLATION

47. Inflationary cost pressures of £3.5m are projected within the HRA for 2025/26, rising to £17.3m by 2029/30, with contracted expenditure forecast to grow in line with the General Fund projections at 1.7% in 2025/26, then 2% thereafter in line with the Bank of England target rate. The pay award for the HRA is similarly in line with the General Fund at 3% in 2025/26 reducing to 2% per annum thereafter, with energy forecast to reduce in 2025/26 offsetting the increase in expenditure in year 1, before returning to a 5% increase thereafter. Further analysis of the inflation requirement is presented in Appendix B2 to the Consultation Budget.

CAPITAL CHARGES

48. Capital investment plans expanded upon later in this report necessitate £444.4m of new borrowing over the period to 2029/30, the ongoing servicing and repayment of which will add £12.0m to HRA service expenditure over the MTFs period. These financing charges reflect current borrowing costs, with underlying investment continuing to meet the thresholds for affordability, sustainability and prudence.

GROWTH

49. Growth of £1.5m was added to the HRA in 2024/25 to fund £0.5m of regulatory costs and £1.0m of repairs and maintenance costs, with the in-year monitoring position reporting that this growth bid is sufficient to cover these costs, with no further growth required in the HRA over the next 5 years.

SAVINGS

50. With the Council presenting a balanced budget for the HRA and maintaining reserves at £15.0m over the life of the budget strategy, the HRA is not in a position where efficiency savings are required, however, it is worth noting that this does not mean the HRA will seek to maximise efficiency opportunities with the running of the Council's housing stock.

HRA Capital Programme

51. Capital investment of £931m in expansion and enhancement of the housing stock over the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 has been fully reflected within this consultation budget, including £725.2m funding to deliver 1,669 net increase in dwellings and £206.0m investment in existing housing stock. Further detail on these investment plans can be found in Appendix B4, with a brief overview set out below.

52. Investment in new housing includes £132.3m budgets for the flagship regeneration projects on the Avondale and Hayes Town Centre estates which are expected to deliver 370 new homes, a net increase of 72 on the current configuration. A further £592.9m has been allocated to deliver 1,299 net increase in units through internal development and acquisitions, with project timelines set out to maximise use of retained Right to Buy receipts over the MTFS period.
53. £156.4m has been budgeted for an enhanced programme of works to stock, based around a five-year cycle and including renewal of key components such as kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, windows and boilers, with this budget significantly increase since February 2024 to increase the standard of tenants' homes. A further £49.7m is included for further investment in insulation measures and green investments, with this programme of investment intended to increase energy efficiency and thereby contribute towards tackling fuel poverty. Additionally, investment in major adaptations to properties will continue, ensuring that the wider needs of HRA tenants can be supported in their own homes where appropriate.

Table 7: HRA Capital Programme

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Major Projects	88.9	177.6	68.8	69.1	69.3
Housing Regeneration Programme	16.0	13.2	41.8	29.5	0.0
Programmes of Work	37.5	42.8	35.4	27.5	28.1
Total	142.4	233.6	146.0	126.1	97.4

BACKGROUND PAPERS

2025/26 BUDGET AND FUTURE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY, presented to 12 December 2024 Cabinet Meeting ([London Borough of Hillingdon - Agenda for CABINET on Thursday, 12th December, 2024, 7.00 pm](#))

General Fund Budget Savings Programme		T h e m e	Annual Movement in Budget Requirement					Three Year Outlook	Five Year Outlook
			2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	£'000	£'000
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Savings by Portfolio									
Property, Highways & Transport			(762)	(530)	0	0	0	(1,292)	(1,292)
Finance			(1,138)	(211)	(57)	0	0	(1,406)	(1,406)
Corporate Services			(5,064)	(1,192)	(230)	0	0	(6,486)	(6,486)
Residents' Services			(6,585)	(1,084)	(786)	0	0	(8,455)	(8,455)
Children, Families & Education			(5,247)	(1,880)	(2,016)	0	0	(9,143)	(9,143)
Health & Social Care			(7,787)	(1,123)	0	0	0	(8,910)	(8,910)
Cross-Cutting Initiatives			(6,000)	(11,800)	(1,700)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(19,500)	(29,500)
Specific Savings Proposals			(32,583)	(17,820)	(4,789)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(55,192)	(65,192)
Savings Programme by Theme									
Service Transformation (T)			(22,930)	(14,168)	(2,283)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(39,381)	(49,381)
Digital Strategy (D)			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Workforce (W)			(100)	(100)	0	0	0	(200)	(200)
Procurement (P)			(1,066)	(998)	(600)	0	0	(2,664)	(2,664)
Income Generation & Commercialisation (C)			(5,782)	(1,770)	(1,120)	0	0	(8,672)	(8,672)
Zero Based Reviews (Z)			(2,705)	(784)	(786)	0	0	(4,275)	(4,275)
Impact on Other Funds (O)			0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Specific Savings Proposals			(32,583)	(17,820)	(4,789)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(55,192)	(65,192)
Savings Proposals									
Increase Leased Temporary Accommodation		(T)	(1,600)					(1,600)	(1,600)
Temporary Accommodation Commissioning - Review Zero / Low Subsidy Accommodation		(Z)	(1,500)	(750)	(750)			(3,000)	(3,000)

General Fund Budget Savings Programme		T h e m e	Annual Movement in Budget Requirement					Three Year Outlook	Five Year Outlook
			2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	£'000	£'000
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
	Review & Charge Parking Fine Level Banding	(C)	(600)					(600)	(600)
	Temporary Accommodation - re-negotiate to reduce rates with all B&B / private sector providers	(T)	(500)					(500)	(500)
	Review the Discount of the Hillingdon First Card Preferential Parking Rates	(C)	(331)					(331)	(331)
	Statutory Planning Fee Increase - Householders	(C)	(300)					(300)	(300)
	Christmas Lighting Sponsorship Model	(T)	(230)					(230)	(230)
	Review Out of Hours Noise Nuisance Service	(T)	(220)					(220)	(220)
	Beck Theatre Subsidy	(T)	(270)					(270)	(270)
	Review Seasonal Hanging Basket Displays	(T)	(92)					(92)	(92)
	Platinum Jubilee Leisure Centre Management Fee	(C)	(80)	(70)				(150)	(150)
	Review of Stronger Communities Service	(Z)	(79)					(79)	(79)
	Review Domestic Abuse Support Contracts	(P)	(79)	(80)				(159)	(159)
	Environmental Specialists Staffing Costs Realignment	(Z)	(66)					(66)	(66)
	Pay and Display Machine Cash Collection	(C)	(66)					(66)	(66)
	Business Rates Rateable Review	(C)	(65)					(65)	(65)
	Fees & Charges Uplifts	(C)	(65)					(65)	(65)
	Parking Fees and Charges: Introduce Sunday Charging	(C)	(60)	(150)				(210)	(210)
	Fast Track Planning Service	(Z)	(60)	(3)	(3)			(66)	(66)
	Increase in Car Park Revenue from Increased Demand	(C)	(50)					(50)	(50)
	Review Green Flag Award Scheme	(T)	(43)					(43)	(43)
	Building Control Fee Uplift	(Z)	(42)	(15)	(16)			(73)	(73)
	Meeting Room Hire Revenue in Libraries	(T)	(40)					(40)	(40)
	Residents' Service Vacant Post Review	(Z)	(39)					(39)	(39)
	Discretionary Planning Fees Uplift	(Z)	(31)	(16)	(17)			(64)	(64)
	Review Hillingdon Voluntary Centre Grants	(T)	(30)					(30)	(30)

General Fund Budget Savings Programme		T h e m e	Annual Movement in Budget Requirement					Three Year Outlook	Five Year Outlook
			2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30		
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		
	Review Library Stock Budget	(T)	(30)					(30)	(30)
	Hillingdon in Bloom and the Autumn Show	(T)	(17)					(17)	(17)
	Total Residents' Services Savings		(6,585)	(1,084)	(786)	0	0	(8,455)	(8,455)

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Agenda Item 7

REVIEW FINDINGS: “A Review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey”

Committee name	Residents’ Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny – Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Updated Scoping Report Appendix 2 – Guidance on Policy Reviews Appendix 3 – Minutes of previous meetings relating to the review
Ward	All Wards

HEADLINES

Background

As part of the review into Homelessness and the Customer Journey, Members are requested to consider findings, conclusions and early draft recommendations in relation to the review for broader discussion and stocktake of the review to-date. These will be with the intention of enhancing the current Council’s Housing Advice and Homelessness Service, with a particular focus on the residents’ journey through the system and customer service.

Summary

The Committee has, to date, held five witness sessions. The intention of these sessions was to obtain feedback from a range of stakeholders with a view to enhancing the Council’s Housing Advice and Homelessness Service.

At the first witness session Members heard from key officers representing the Council’s Housing Team – Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director of Central Services), Melissa Blower (Housing Improvement Programme Manager), Debby Weller (Head of Housing Strategy and Policy), and Maggie Nelson (Head of Housing Needs). Members heard about the challenging homelessness situation, noting a 27% increase in demand driven by evictions and a 41% reduction in affordable rental supply. The Council’s strategy included purchasing 500 new homes and improving systems. The customer pathway involved initial online contact, triage, and case officer assignment, with prevention and relief stages. Partnerships with Trinity and Thames Reach supported rough sleepers. The Homelessness Strategy was being reviewed with a focus on prevention and Autism/ADHD. Staff training was being enhanced, and new IT systems would improve efficiency. The Council was exploring property acquisitions and addressing temporary accommodation standards. Staff wellbeing and customer experience improvements were also priorities.

The second witness session was attended by Carys Hedley, Director of Services at Trinity. Challenges such as the reduction in private rental accommodation and increasing unaffordability, particularly for non-priority individuals were discussed. It was confirmed that Trinity provided 231 supported spaces and 41 long-term unsupported accommodation places, supporting families fleeing war and offering tenancy sustainment services. The strong partnership between the Council and Trinity was highlighted, though issues like stagnation due to Local Housing Allowance rates and reluctance to move outside the Borough were noted. Members heard that Trinity planned to create a specialist housing programme with full-time live-in support for individuals with complex needs. Improvements were needed in systems and technology for case handovers, and

a more welcoming environment at the Civic Centre was suggested. The importance of correct referrals, comprehensive support to prevent homelessness, and safeguarding young people was emphasised. Staff well-being measures and the Council's efforts to improve customer experience and engagement were highlighted, along with the need for empathy and appropriate training for housing staff.

At the third witness session, the Committee heard from representatives of P3 and Thames Reach. Sophie Murray from Thames Reach highlighted their collaboration with the Council and other agencies to support rough sleepers, despite challenges like high support needs and limited accommodation options. Representatives from P3 discussed their support services for young people and families, emphasising the difficulties in finding affordable move-on housing. Communication issues within the Housing Department and the need for better systems were noted. The importance of patience and trust-building with homeless individuals, especially asylum seekers, was stressed. P3 and Thames Reach highlighted the need for improved communication with the Council and suggested a central database for better coordination. The Corporate Director acknowledged the need for service improvements and outlined ongoing efforts, including a workforce plan and recruitment campaign, to address the increasing demand for homelessness services.

The fourth witness session afforded Members the opportunity to hear from IDVAs and Social Prescribers. Concerns were raised about the approach to housing for domestic abuse victims, particularly the requirement for police involvement and documentation, which could be challenging for those fleeing emergency situations. The Committee discussed the impact of relocating victims away from their support systems and inconsistencies in housing policies. The importance of clear communication, professional interpreters, and a welcoming environment at the Housing Reception was emphasised. The need for better communication and coordination between housing officers and support services was highlighted, along with the importance of empathy and understanding in handling domestic abuse cases. Rachel Bulley from Colne Union PCN discussed the role of social prescribers in addressing social and well-being needs, supporting the points raised about domestic abuse. The Committee acknowledged the challenges faced by housing officers and the need for improvements in communication, support services, and training. They also discussed the impact of housing issues on mental health and the importance of clear processes and accessible support services. Officers emphasised the need for clinical supervision and support for team members dealing with violence cases. The importance of preventing homelessness, strengthening staff training, and improving communication with residents was highlighted, as was the need for better coordination and communication to ensure domestic abuse victims received necessary support.

Finally, the fifth witness session was attended by colleagues from the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Jas Nagra and Joanna Smith from CAB highlighted the high demand for housing advice, challenges due to limited resources, and issues with communication and responsiveness from the Council's housing officers. They emphasised the need for better cooperation, regular meetings, and improved communication to address issues effectively. The importance of managing public expectations, providing empathy, and ensuring better training for housing officers was also discussed.

Members are now requested to start to consider their early collective findings so these can be worked up in more detail, and ultimately incorporated into the final report to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Select Committee consider possible conclusions, findings and early draft recommendations in relation to the review.
2. That the Select Committee agree to delegate the final wording of the review recommendations to Democratic Services in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Labour Lead.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In considering this item, Members should bear in mind the following:

1) Scoping report – looking at the original parameters of the review

The updated review scoping report is attached so Members can be reminded of the original Terms of Reference as set out below:

1. To gain a thorough understanding of the Council's Homeless Prevention Service and the resident's journey through this process.
2. To scrutinise the service delivery and review its effectiveness.
3. To review service users' feedback to explore the challenges faced by residents accessing the service.
4. To look at other local authorities that may have different models of service delivery for best practice, including research and findings from charities, housing bodies, regional bodies and organisations, e.g. GLA.
5. Subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose practical and deliverable actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

2) Policy review guidance

Members will recall the guidance issued in July 2022 on undertaking policy reviews. This guidance is attached to this report for reference again, and Members are asked to take into account Point 4 on Findings and draft recommendations and in particular whether they:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review (as above)
- Be SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Consider the financial aspect, e.g. cost neutral, provide savings or if at a cost, then affordable – and if possible, aligned with the MTFF (budget planning process)
- Are based on a broad evidence base as possible and 'user or resident' insight
- Not create additional bureaucracy, e.g. if it relates to a policy, then to seek to review or amend existing policies (unless there is an absolute imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as any specific recommendations.

3) Minutes of previous meetings

Attached as Appendix 3 are the minutes of previous meetings relating to the review, which may assist in Members' considerations.

4) Possible areas for emerging recommendations

In discussion with the Chair, Members may wish to consider the following 'areas' to develop and refine draft recommendations:

- Improvements to communication between housing officers, partners and residents;
- Improved continuity during staff changes and periods of absence;
- Audits of calls and correspondence to ensure consistency and quality;
- Introducing a guide to ensure all new clients fully understand the process and know what to expect;
- Client experience feedback from residents to gain insight on homelessness services;
- Additional staff wellbeing support;
- Training for housing officers in relation to empathy and trauma-informed care;
- A review of documentation requirements and the introduction of standard templates where possible;
- Enhancing Housing Reception layout to make it more efficient, welcoming and child-friendly.

Committee Members may also wish to bring their own findings and thoughts based upon the witness testimony received.

Democratic Services will then "road-test" any draft recommendations from the Committee, looking at their feasibility with the relevant service area and report back to the Committee to a subsequent meeting, in preparation for shaping the final draft report for the Committee's approval.

Please note that, further to a recent meeting with the Chair, Labour Lead and officers, suggested draft recommendations will be tabled separately for consideration prior to the Select Committee meeting on 14 January 2025.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The aim of the review into homelessness and the customer journey is to improve the customer experience of those who approach the Council for help with their housing situation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.



Residents' Services Select Committee Review Scoping Report - 2023/2024

A Review of Homeless Prevention & the Customer Journey

1. OBJECTIVES

Aim of the review

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Residents' Services Select Committee agreed to undertake a major review of the Council's Housing Advice and Homelessness Service, with a particular focus on the residents' journey through the system and customer service.

This review aims to consider ways in which the customer journey could potentially be improved to better support residents during this process and improve residents' satisfaction with the way in which they access advice and support, to prevent homelessness. It is advised that the scope of any Select Committee's review is limited to the customer journey and how residents access the services and how advice is given as the homelessness process is set out in legislation. This will ensure any review can remain focussed.

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference are suggested for the review, subject to any changes agreed by the Committee:

1. To gain a thorough understanding of the Council's Homeless Prevention Service and the resident's journey through this process.
2. To scrutinise the service delivery and review its effectiveness.

3. To review service users' feedback to explore the challenges faced by residents accessing the service.
4. To look at other local authorities that may have different models of service delivery for best practice, including research and findings from charities, housing bodies, regional bodies and organisations, e.g. GLA.
5. Subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose practical and deliverable actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

2. BACKGROUND

National Context

The quarterly data published by the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) shows that nationally demand for affordable housing has risen sharply, with homelessness presentations to local authorities a particular pressure. At the end of June 2023, nearly 139,000 families with children were living in temporary accommodation – 7,430 more than at the end of March. 68,070 families with children were living in temporary accommodation (TA) at the end of June, 7,510 in B&Bs; a 93% increase over one year.

Nationally, there were circa 21,000 homeless acceptances in the second quarter of the year, an increase of 19% on a year ago.

There has been an 18% increase in the number of households who were homeless and helped by councils as a result of no-fault evictions.

London Councils has urged the Government to end the freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to prevent almost 60,000 Londoners in the private rented sector from becoming homeless over the next six years.

Research, which was commissioned by a cross-party group and carried out by Alma Economics, has estimated that an additional 16,500 to 22,000 London households will become homeless by 2030 unless the LHA is raised. London Councils stated that 22,000 households equate to 58,740 individuals, including 28,000 children. One in seven private renters in London are reliant on LHA to meet their housing costs.

The research suggested that restoring LHA to cover at least 30 per cent of local market rents would save the public finances in London more than £100m each year. The majority of these savings would come from reduced pressure on London boroughs' homelessness services, but also from lower costs to other parts of the public sector such as the NHS and social care. London accounts for more than half (57 per cent) of England's total number of homeless households in temporary accommodation.

In August, London Councils found that almost 170,000 Londoners were homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged by their local authority. This is equivalent to around one in 50 Londoners overall and one in 23 children in the capital.

Turbulence in the capital's private rented sector is a "critical factor" behind the growing numbers of homeless Londoners. Research from the group and partners, published in July 2023, revealed a 41 per cent drop in private rental listings in the capital since 2020, while listed rental prices rose by 20 per cent.

The Autumn statement 2023 has announced that LHA is to be restored to 30% percentile local market rents for 2024/25 and then held at that level in cash terms.

Local Context

In Hillingdon we have seen a 27% increase in Homeless Presentations since the same period last year. We are receiving on average 100 new approaches each week for housing advice and support. The main reason for homelessness remains the ending of private rented tenancies with 27% of approaches being for this reason.

Households leaving friends or family accommodation represent 24% of all approaches and those requiring a move due to domestic abuse is just under 8%. The Council has also seen a considerable increase this year in households leaving asylum accommodation following receipt of their status and this represents 10% of all approaches.

The increase in presentations coupled with the lack of affordable private rented accommodation has placed considerable pressure on the service with the use of temporary accommodation now at 1,126 which is an increase of 492 since 2022/23.

Legislative Context

Any homeless decisions must be made in line with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and the Housing Act 1996 Part VII amended in 2002.

Anyone who is eligible can access advice on how they are able to resolve their situation or where to look for alternative accommodation but to be entitled to a full homeless duty, residents must meet the below five criteria.

- **Homeless or threatened with homelessness** - within 56 days. This can be due to notice being served or because the property is unsafe for the person to continue to reside within.
- **Eligible** – this relates to a person's immigration status, persons without recourse to public funds or those that are not considered habitually resident are not eligible.
- **Priority need** – this can be granted due to a number of reasons; for example, the person may have dependent children, be at risk of domestic abuse or be vulnerable as a result of a health condition or disability.
- **Not be intentionally homeless** – this is when a person has deliberately done something to cause them to lose their home for example caused anti-social behaviour or did not pay the rent when they could afford to do so.

- **Have a Local Connection** – the person has resided within the area or have close family living within the area for a prescribed period of time.

Continuous Service Improvement

The Council has a homeless service improvement programme (Project Neptune) in place that is implementing change and improvement across twelve workstreams. These are:

1. Strategy
2. Leadership
3. Performance
4. People
5. Systems
6. Resources
7. Entice (web & messaging)
8. Engage (accessing the service)
9. Experience (case management)
10. Exit (access to accommodation)
11. Embed (develop learning from the latest trends or demands)
12. Broader Issues

Since the project began in July 2023 there have been several changes delivered within the service and work remains ongoing to make the relevant service improvements.

One of the ways in which the Council has improved the customer journey is through the reinstatement of the triage function. This means that following submission of an application for housing advice and assistance, residents receive contact within 48 hours from an officer who can advise them on the supporting information they need for their application. This not only means that the Council remains in close contact with the resident but also ensures their case is allocated to a caseworker as soon as possible. Upon the case being allocated the resident is then sent an update on who their caseworker is, along with their caseworker's direct contact details and a link to be able to book an appointment with their caseworker at a mutually agreeable time.

Work is currently ongoing to review the website and the information available to residents to ensure that the Council's website offers support to those looking for advice, whilst also ensuring that the Council is setting expectations from the first point of contact about the type of support on offer.

Work also continues to review our ICT systems to reduce the administrative burden on staff to create further capacity for officers to support residents with their housing situations.

We have also developed a fresh training offer for staff new into the service and have been delivering a programme of development for our existing staff to ensure officers

have the relevant skills and knowledge to support our residents in need of housing advice.

Connected work

The internal audit progress review report dated 31 January 2024 indicates that limited assurance was given on homeless housing applications and states that:

“To avoid duplicating the wider housing transformation project this review focused on the operational management of homeless housing applications.

Testing identified weaknesses with the completion of documentation, including insufficient evidence of any segregation of duties with regards to approving decisions. We found no evidence to suggest the applications tested were not eligible for the support they received, however the gaps in the controls may have allowed other fraudulent applications.

Demand pressures and ongoing changes within the service also contributed to our findings in relation to the wider governance arrangements within the Service. However, these are being addressed as part of the wider housing transformation project.

Internal Audit was also able to see evidence of proactive preventative action being taken to reduce demand on the service. Key performance indicators in relation to these preventative measures are in place to help ensure appropriate action is taken.”

Executive Responsibilities

The portfolio Cabinet Member responsible is Councillor Eddie Lavery.

3. EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Potential witnesses (including service users)

- Dan Kennedy – Corporate Director of Central Services
- Maggie Nelson – Head of Housing Needs
- Debby Weller – Head of Strategy & Policy
- Melissa Blower – Housing Project Manager
- Representatives from other local authorities / housing organisations / charities, e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau, P3, Trinity, Thames Reach and Bell Farm Christian Centre
- service users (local residents who have required housing assistance)
- social prescribers

Lines of Enquiry

Lines of enquiry can be expanded as the review progresses or included in relevant witness session reports. However, lines of enquiry may include:

- establishing how effectively the housing advice service is being delivered.
- focus on the end user and how they have found the service in practice.
- exploring what support functions are in place and whether these can be improved.
- experiences from other local authorities and housing related organisations

Potential Witnesses

Witnesses will be identified by the Committee in consultation with relevant officers.

Surveys, site-visits or other fact-finding events

Such opportunities will be identified as the review progresses and could include a site visit to Housing Services Reception or a particular advice surgery.

Performance data and future information that may be required

To undertake this review the following data sources could be examined and provided:

- Anonymous summary details of Members’ Enquiries, Service Requests and Customer complaints or suggestions received relating to residents' housing experiences.
- Satisfaction surveys or other feedback methods of eliciting customer feedback on their journey and experience e.g. mystery shopping.
- Case studies.
- Ombudsman decisions.
- Further information may also be identified as the review progresses.

4. REVIEW PLANNING & TIMETABLE

Proposed timeframe & milestones for the review:

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose / theme	Witnesses / officers attending
16 January 2024	Agree Review Topic	Information and analysis	Dan Kennedy Melissa Blower Debby Weller Maggie Nelson
13 February 2024	Agree Scoping Report	Information and analysis	Melissa Blower
13 March 2024	Witness Session 1	Information and analysis	Dan Kennedy Melissa Blower

			Maggie Nelson
16 April 2024	Witness Session 2	Information and analysis	Dan Kennedy Trinity
13 June 2024	Witness Session 3	Information and analysis	Dan Kennedy Thames Reach P3
18 July 2024	Witness Session 4	Information and analysis	Melissa Blower Dan Kennedy IDVAs Social Prescribers
24 September 2024	Witness Session 5	Information and analysis	Citizen's Advice Bureau Written Submissions
Outside the Committee – Survey, networking session, consultation, informal meeting with users, site visit, mystery shopper etc...			
27 November 2024	De-brief and emerging findings	To discuss key findings and identify potential recommendations	
19 February 2025	Approval of draft final report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report to Cabinet	

Resource requirements

None.

Equalities impact

The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.

- foster good relations between people from different groups.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services. There are no equality impact issues relating to the matters set out in this report.

Background Papers / further reading

[Housing advice - Hillingdon Council](#)

Appendix 2 - Guidance on undertaking policy reviews

Over the years, Hillingdon's overview and scrutiny committees have undertaken successful in-depth reviews of Council services and policies. This has resulted in a number of positive changes locally, with some also affecting policy at a national level. Such committees engage Councillors in a wide range of Council activity and build a greater understanding about service provision to residents.

Policy reviews generally seek to:

1. Address a [significant] matter affecting the Borough
2. Seek to improve the delivery and/or efficiency of local services
3. Consider changes to policies or procedures to improve outcomes to residents/users

REVIEW PHASES

The typical phases of a review are as follows and set out further below:

- 1 Selection of topic
- 2 Scoping the review / setting out objectives
- 3 Witness & evidence stage (this is the main activity)
- 4 Findings and Draft recommendations (possible early report draft)
- 5 Final report approved by Committee
- 6 Referred to Cabinet for consideration
- 7 Monitoring the implementation of recommendations once approved / amended by Cabinet at meetings, i.e. in six months

1. Selection of topic

It is always best to sound out and check the feasibility of potential review topics early on, as there will be lots of ideas coming forward and often knowing what topic will add most value will be difficult to gauge at this stage. It is important not to generalise, e.g. a review into waste services.

It may also not be known whether a topic is currently under review by the Cabinet or Council officers or part of a planned service transformation in due course. All of this and other factors need to be investigated and in particular, any duplication of review activity should not take place.

Whilst most policy reviews last a number of months, not all policy review ideas will suit this and may benefit from a single meeting review. It really depends on the scope of the review. It very narrow, i.e. a particular service policy, then a single meeting review may suffice. If a review seeks to look at an entire way a service operates then a number of months may be required to ensure you can undertake all your witness sessions and secure the necessary evidence and information before you formulate your findings.

Ideas for review topics can come from a number of sources including:

- Committee Members
- Cabinet Members.
- Council officers
- External partners / organisations
- Residents
- Ombudsman findings

When Councillors or the Committee itself considers a potential review topic, it is recommended running it through the Scrutiny Topic Scorecard (see Annex A). This gives you the opportunity to ‘score’ topics based upon their impacts under the following criteria:

Resident focused	Influence	Achievable
Correct remit	New	Wider support
Drives improvement	Drives transformation and efficiency	National impact

Another way to consider a potential review topic, is to add this as an information item at an upcoming meeting on your work programme, to probe the matter further with Council officers and ascertain whether it merits a fuller review – again perhaps running it through the Scorecard above.

It is strongly advised that one review topic is undertaken at any one time, given resources.

2. Scoping report

Once a topic is agreed upon by the Committee, then officers will prepare a scoping report setting out the objectives of the review for your consideration. The scoping report will show how the review can be timetabled and structured, i.e. through themed witness sessions, along with details of potential witnesses and other contextual information to get the review started, e.g. lines of enquiry or questioning of witnesses.

The scoping report is a ‘live’ document owned by the Committee. Should the review’s focus change mid-review, then the scoping document and its objectives can be adapted.

3. Witness and evidence stage

Ultimately, the Committee’s efforts are at their best when external witnesses and residents participate, adding value to intelligence gathering and findings. In support of this, Committees have undertaken a variety of both formal and informal activity “in meetings” and “outside meetings”. It is important to pull together a broad evidence based for any potential findings later on. Additionally, the ability for Councillors to bring their ‘local’ insight is highly valuable. Activities the Committee can undertake include:

- Surveys / social media
- Promotion of review to seek views
- Invite the relevant Cabinet Member to attend for their views
- Question key council officers
- Hold informal workshops
- Networking events, e.g. with partners
- Have closed meetings, i.e. confidential, such as social care clients

- Commission reports from council officers / externally
- Request data and intelligence on the topic
- Visits to other local authorities
- Undertake site visits within the Borough or council facilities
- Appoint experts or advisors to join the Committee throughout its review
- Selecting the best range of witnesses to get a real user / resident perspectives
- Invite national experts in their field

Whilst information will be provided to Councillors, it may be helpful when preparing for this stage of a review, that Councillors:

- Prepare their draft questions for each witness in advance;
- Read a witness bio or find out more about their organisation;
- Do their own additional research on the topic - you may find something officers don't!
- Use their network of councillors in other local authorities to seek views;
- Tell residents at Surgeries / Ward Walks about your review, get their thoughts.

4. Findings and draft recommendations & 5. Final Report

After hearing from witnesses and receiving evidence, the Committee then will meet to pull together all the information and shape its collective findings, i.e. what needs to be improved or changed as a result.

The Committee will form 'draft' recommendations from this, which consistent with the Protocol on Cabinet and Scrutiny Relations, are usually shared with the Cabinet Member for their feedback and valuable insight.

In developing any recommendation, the Committee should bear in mind the following:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review
- Be SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Consider the financial aspect, e.g. cost neutral, provide savings or if at a cost, then affordable – and if possible aligned with the MTFP (budget planning process)
- Be based on a broad evidence base as possible and 'user or resident' insight
- Not create additional bureaucracy, e.g. if it relates to a policy, then to seek to review or amend existing policies (unless there is an absolute imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as any specific recommendations.

Around this time, the Democratic Services Officer supporting the Committee will advise further on findings and drafting recommendations. Throughout this process, their role is critical to the Committee, to guide Members and secure the information and any witness activity that Members wish to undertake. They also work with the Chairman to bring the final draft report for the Committee to approve before it is scheduled to Cabinet.

6. Referred to Cabinet & 7. Monitoring of recommendations

The Committee's report will be shared with the Leader and Cabinet Member and scheduled to a Cabinet meeting as soon as possible. There is a legal requirement for any such report to be considered by the Cabinet.

Should Cabinet approve the Committee's recommendations, then they become official policy and officers are charged with implementing them.

A post report review is undertaken in say 6 months or a years' time to see how the Committee's recommendations have been implemented. This is scheduled on your work programme.

Annex A – Scrutiny Topic Scorecard 2022-2026

<i>Criteria scores showing 1-5 (5 being the highest, 0 the lowest). Then add up the total score. The higher the better review.</i>										
Topic	Resident focused	Correct remit	Influence	New	Achievable	Wider support	Drives improvement	Delivers transformation and efficiency	National impact	Score

See criteria descriptions overleaf...

Detailed criteria to assess review scoring (5 being the highest, 0 the lowest)	
Resident-focused	– The topic will have high impact on residents and the community, with public interest and scope for making a positive difference (can be universal or a targeted group of people or an area of the Borough e.g. young people or a particular town centre)
Correct remit	– A topic that is clearly covered in the Committee’s Terms of Reference and does it cut clearly into the domain of other Committees (unless a cross-cutting brief). If it does, then see if you can narrow the focus of the topic.
Influence	- A topic that relates to a service, event or issue in which the Council is in control of, has a significant stake in or influence over the matter, e.g. with partners.
New	- A new, fresh topic preferably. One which has not previously been reviewed by a Committee in the last 2-3 years, or which is not currently being reviewed by another Committee or internally by Cabinet Members and Officers, e.g. through service transformation.
Achievable	– A topic that is not open ended. One where the Committee’s work programme can accommodate the review. Where there is likely to be a good level of expertise and information to draw on to complete. Does the topic need to be narrowed to make it more achievable?
Wider support	- A topic that is likely to receive buy-in from the Committee and wider Council, e.g. Cabinet Members, Officers. Or support is welcome from partner organisations to review the matter.
Drives improvement	- A topic where performance levels of a service have dropped on a consistent basis, or the contractor is not performing against agreed standards or there are significance (evidenced) complaints or feedback from residents on the matter.
Delivers transformation and efficiency	– a topic in support of the Council budgetary objectives, any areas where service re-modelling is under consideration in the <u>medium to longer-term</u> , that with Members’ insight can help to deliver future savings, efficiencies and value for money services to residents. A topic where new ways of working could be adopted to benefit service delivery.
National impact	– A topic where emerging or recent legislation mean that it would be timely to review the matter to ensure Hillingdon Council is well prepared. Or a topic, that whilst Hillingdon focussed, could potentially be of benefit to other local councils or governmental authorities.

Residents' Services Select Committee – Review of Homelessness & the Customer Journey

SITE VISITS

As part of the review, site visits to the Contact Centre and to the Housing Reception Area at the Civic Centre were arranged for Committee Members. Some Members also participated in unannounced B&B visits alongside the Council's Counter Fraud Team.

Further to the visits, improvements to the Housing Reception Area were suggested to make it more welcoming - these included planting, a seating area and a children's play area.

MEETING MINUTES

WITNESS SESSION 1 – 13 MARCH 2024

Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director of Central Services), Melissa Blower (Housing Improvement Programme Manager), Debby Weller (Head of Housing Strategy and Policy) and Maggie Nelson (Head of Housing Needs) were in attendance to present the report and answer Members' questions.

The Corporate Director of Central Services acknowledged that the current situation in relation to homelessness was extremely challenging. There had been a 27% increase in demand with 100 people presenting as homeless each week. This was primarily being driven by evictions from private rental accommodation. It was noted that, over the last five years, there had been an increase in demand but a 41% reduction in affordable privately rented accommodation supply. The Council's strategy focussed on homelessness prevention and boosting of supply; 500 new homes were to be purchased and officers were also exploring ways in which they could increase supply in the private rental sector. The Council was also investing in improved systems and processes to improve the customer experience.

The Head of Housing Needs addressed the Committee Members and provided an overview of the customer pathway from start to finish. Members heard that customers usually approached the Council via the website in the first instance by completing an online form. The information provided was assessed and advice and guidance given if necessary. If appropriate, the enquiry was then passed to the triage team who assisted the customer in providing the information required and determined which additional documents needed to be provided. This enabled the team to establish whether the customer was eligible for assistance; some applicants had limited / no recourse to public funds. If eligibility was established, the case was assigned to a case officer.

Once assigned to a case officer, the first stage was prevention; officers tried to intervene as early as possible e.g. by negotiating with landlords in an attempt to enable the tenant to stay in their current accommodation. If prevention was unsuccessful, the

next stage was the relief stage at which point alternative accommodation was sought. A maximum of 56 days was allocated for both the prevention and relief stages of the process. During the relief stage, advice and guidance was provided to assist the client in securing accommodation. If they had a priority need for temporary accommodation, this would be provided. Temporary accommodation for larger families was difficult to source and very expensive, so these families were sometimes encouraged to remain in situ for as long as possible i.e. until a bailiff warrant was secured; however, they had the right to assist on temporary accommodation being provided if they did not wish to wait.

Once an individual or a family had been placed in temporary accommodation, officers then tried to secure private rented accommodation for them; affordability was a factor and the accommodation offered was sometimes out of borough. Once a property had been secured and the clients had moved in, the duty was discharged. If no accommodation had been organised by day 57 of the relief stage, officers would need to reach a decision within 15 days as to whether the Council had a longer-term duty to them.

It was acknowledged that the current situation was challenging with fewer houses becoming available. Many landlords were increasing their rents or choosing to sell their properties. Officers were aware that this was a very stressful situation for people and tried to be as empathetic as possible.

The Head of Housing Strategy and Policy was in attendance and provided an update on partnerships around homelessness. Members heard that the Council had a number of established partnerships with the voluntary sector, particularly with Trinity who assisted in meeting the needs of rough sleepers. Thames Reach also worked closely with the Council and helped with outreach projects to identify those who were sleeping rough at Heathrow and throughout the Borough. Heathrow presented a significant challenge - Thames Reach worked at the airport and a mental health worker also visited the airport to assist.

The Committee was informed that first stage accommodation was available at Olympic House which was managed by Trinity. There were other similar accommodation options across the borough which offered a lot of support including in relation to the health aspects associated with rough sleeping – this was mainly funded by CNWL. The funding was in place until the end of 2025, but it was hoped it would continue thereafter. Other support for those with drug or alcohol addiction was available through Arch – Hillingdon; grant funding was also available for this service.

Members heard that the Homelessness Strategy was a statutory 5-year document which ran until the end of 2024 and was in the process of being reviewed. It was anticipated that a draft of the new Strategy would be available in the autumn. There had been a number of key changes and 'Project Neptune' would feed into the new Strategy. There would be a focus on prevention and the issue of Autism / ADHD and the homeless would be explored which had not been included in the past. The current Strategy would be reviewed over the course of the next few months and the consultation process would be completed over the summer. Service users would be involved in this process to ensure their experience of the customer journey and how this fed into service provision was included.

Members sought further clarification regarding the current staff training programme noting that service users often presented with mental health issues, and some reported that officers were judgemental and lacked empathy. In response to this, it was confirmed that training was available for all staff. Trauma-informed issues training was to be introduced in the near future and was booked for 1 May 2024. New training was also to be introduced in response to new legislation which set out the duty of the Council in respect of domestic abuse.

In response to further questions from Councillors, it was confirmed that, in the past, customers often had the same case officer throughout the housing process. Unfortunately, this was no longer the case due to staff turnover and an increase in case numbers; there was a reliance on technology to ensure cases were effectively passed on to new officers.

Members sought further clarity regarding the 56-day relief stage of the process. It was confirmed that, if a suitable property were secured, it would be offered to the family in question. The family was not obliged to accept the property but, if they chose not to, the Council's duty would be discharged at that point. The customer could request an independent review and a decision would be taken independently – a further 56 days were allocated for this process. Should the Council's original decision be upheld, its duty would be discharged at that point. However, if the Council's decision were overturned, the family would be offered an alternative property in due course.

With regard to accountability, the Committee was advised that officers were responsible for ensuring all the necessary information was on file. Senior officers carried out quality assurance checks and met with officers once a month to review their caseload and address any concerns.

Members expressed concern regarding the mental health and wellbeing of officers who were often overloaded with work. It was acknowledged that it was a very stressful role - some officers had previously had up to 100 open cases which was unmanageable. 5 new officers had been recruited to assist and 150 cases had been transferred across to said officers. Staff wellbeing was taken seriously, and extra support was available if needed.

In response to further questions from Councillors, it was confirmed that an out of hours housing service was available. It was acknowledged that not all people wanted to / were able to apply for housing assistance online. If necessary, those who presented in person were directed to support services who could assist them in registering online. Information was also available in other languages. It was confirmed that those who were granted leave to remain were given 28 days' notice then received an eviction letter which only allowed them one week to vacate their premises. Housing officers were working with the Home Office and it had recently been agreed that the 28-day letter would be accepted as notice giving local authorities more time to find appropriate accommodation. It was acknowledged that the situation in relation to single people was particularly challenging as they often did not have a priority need for accommodation.

Councillors enquired whether the IT systems currently in place were fit for purpose and asked how the expectations of clients were managed. In response to this, the Head of Housing Needs recognised that some people thought it was better to present as homeless rather than waiting for a Council property. This was never a good idea. Officers always tried to manage the expectations of customers and ensured they fully understood the process. In terms of the IT systems, Members were informed that Locata was currently used for housing allocations and Jigsaw for homeless applications. From April 2024, the current Jigsaw system would be changing to a Locata-based system thereby enabling the two systems to work together more efficiently. It was confirmed that the new systems would enable officers to drill further into the data to establish patterns and take a more proactive approach. Complaints data would also be used to drive improvements, inform training and improve communication.

Members requested a presentation on the new systems as this would be beneficial.

In terms of acquiring new properties, the Corporate Director of Central Services confirmed that all options were being considered and speed was of the essence. During the first year of a 3-year programme, it would be necessary to purchase property directly, but it was important to ensure that this process did not end up triggering homelessness. If landlords had empty properties or a portfolio to sell, the Council may consider such purchases where appropriate. All options were being considered to boost supply including private rentals of reasonable quality. The social sector was also being explored. The Council would also ensure it achieved the maximum possible in terms of grant funding.

With regard to temporary accommodation, it was recognised that people were sometimes housed in an overcrowded situation for a while due to a lack of available accommodation. If the temporary accommodation provided was not acceptable, action would be taken and the customer would be removed.

Councillors noted that the standard of accommodation provided by private landlords was often unacceptable. A charter was proposed to ensure properties were fully and appropriately vetted. It was suggested that properties should be inspected by other parties to ensure they met the required standard.

At the request of Members, it was agreed that the Head of Housing Needs would prepare a step-by-step summary of the homelessness process which would be circulated to the Select Committee.

It was suggested that a visit to the contact centre would be beneficial to enable Members to better understand the process and see firsthand how officers interacted with other departments across the Council when handling housing-related calls.

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.

WITNESS SESSION 2 – 16 APRIL 2024

The Committee held its second witness session relating to its review of homelessness and the customer experience and heard from Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director of Central Services, and from Carys Hedley representing a partner organisation, Trinity.

The Corporate Director of Central Services began by discussing the challenges local authorities faced regarding homelessness, highlighting a reduction in private rental accommodation, and increasing unaffordability. He emphasised the difficulty for non-priority individuals, often single people, to access affordable housing and the Council's reliance on the voluntary sector i.e. organisations such as Trinity and Thames Reach for support. The Select Committee heard that the Council had been working successfully in partnership with Trinity for a number of years.

Carys Hedley, Director of Services at Trinity, addressed the Select Committee detailing Trinity's provision of 231 supported spaces and 41 long-term unsupported accommodation places in Hillingdon. She mentioned the support offered to families fleeing war and the reconnection service available to assist with tenancy sustainment.

Members heard that Trinity worked closely with the Council and most of the referrals they received came from the local authority. Trinity had been experiencing considerable challenges in recent years, particularly in relation to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. It was now cheaper for people to stay in Trinity accommodation than move into the private rental sector. This was having a significant impact, and the service was becoming stagnant; people were ready to move on but were unable to afford private rentals therefore had nowhere to go. At times, people were offered accommodation outside of the Borough, but they were often reluctant to move away from a familiar area and their support network in Hillingdon. Another concern raised related to the pressure from the number of families and single homeless individuals housed in hotels.

The Select Committee was informed that the current supported housing offered floating support but did not have staff on site full time. Many of the referrals received were from those with complex needs including drug, alcohol and mental health needs. Trinity therefore planned to create a new service offering a specialist housing programme with full-time live-in support, in addition to the supported housing currently provided. However, it was acknowledged that this was extremely challenging given the lack of housing stock in the Borough.

Councillors sought further clarification regarding the nature of the specialist housing offer. It was explained that the plan was for this housing to assist in addressing the need for supported housing with on-site support for individuals with complex needs, including drug, alcohol, and mental health issues.

Members enquired about the impact of other boroughs placing residents in Hillingdon and vice versa. It was confirmed that Trinity prioritised Hillingdon residents but sometimes accepted others due to lack of suitable referrals. The difficulty in encouraging residents to accept housing offers outside their familiar borough was also highlighted.

The Select Committee sought to understand the processes of working with the Council and how to improve them. The strong relationship between Trinity and the rough sleeper team was highlighted but it was noted that there were challenges such as perceived lack of empathy from housing officers, communication issues, and the intimidating environment of the Civic Centre. A rotating system for housing officers to avoid burnout, retraining on language used with clients, and creating a more welcoming environment at the Civic Centre were suggested. It was noted that a rota system to ensure housing officers were not always working in a client-facing role would be beneficial. It was also recommended that staff receive further training regarding the use of appropriate language when dealing with people seeking housing support; these individuals were often in a desperate situation, and it was very difficult for them to hear that they were not considered a priority.

Members acknowledged the need for better systems and technology for case handovers and welcomed suggestions for improving the Civic Centre environment. The Director of Services at Trinity recommended that security staff be trained to be more approachable and friendly when clients presented for support with housing matters. It was suggested that plants would make the environment appear more welcoming as would smiling friendly staff. A family-friendly environment with sofas and toys for the children was also suggested.

The Select Committee sought further information regarding the support for tenants to sustain tenancies. The importance of correct referrals in the first place and comprehensive support to assist clients to live independently and prevent a cycle of homelessness was affirmed.

In response to Members' concerns regarding safeguarding young people, it was confirmed that Trinity conducted individual risk assessments and worked closely with local services to ensure support and safety. If young people were considered too high risk, it was unfortunately not possible to provide housing for them.

Councillors enquired about the impact of asylum seekers in hotels on homelessness. Members heard that Trinity predicted worsening conditions due to quick eviction notices from hotels which was adding to the street homelessness problem. It was noted that the Home Office's strategy to accelerate asylum claims had led to a high number of single, non-priority individuals needing housing.

Members addressed the empathy factor and staff turnover in housing teams. To safeguard the mental health of staff, the Director of Services at Trinity recommended well-being measures, such as regular team meetings where staff could discuss difficult cases, flexible working hours, 'double up working' for challenging cases, away days, regular annual leave, and enforced rest periods to ensure staff members got the respite they needed.

The Corporate Director acknowledged the challenge for officers of not having immediate housing solutions for evicted individuals and emphasised the need for a strong prevention strategy and a healthy supply of affordable housing. The Council was working towards this, but it was proving very challenging. With regard to support for officers, Members were informed that the Council had invested more resources to create a wellbeing room for staff. Case work support supervision had also been

introduced. Improvements were being made but there was still a long way to go. It was confirmed that workforce planning and development was a key part of future plans, but it was acknowledged that recruiting and retaining staff was challenging.

Councillors discussed the mental health of housing staff and the “perfect storm” of reliance on affordable private rented accommodation. The Corporate Director agreed on the importance of good communication and outlined plans to improve customer experience and engagement. It was noted that residents often had to call up repeatedly to request an update on their housing case which was frustrating and upsetting. The Council was working to address this – one possible solution would be for housing officers to provide residents with a weekly update. It was acknowledged that there was room for improvement, but plans were in place to achieve this.

Members raised concerns regarding the lack of empathy and judgmental behaviour of housing staff towards clients, particularly those facing domestic abuse. It was suggested that training should include input from clients themselves to help staff understand and respect the experiences of those they served.

In response to this, Trinity highlighted the benefits of hiring staff with lived experiences to ensure non-judgmental treatment. Members were informed that Trinity gathered feedback from residents through annual surveys to improve services and training, stressing fair and respectful treatment for all.

Members sought further clarification regarding the selection process for social prescribers for the July witness session, noting an apparent unexpected choice in the scoping report. It was confirmed that Democratic Services would follow this up and respond on this matter outside of the meeting.

The Chair concluded the session by thanking the attendees, with the discussion underscoring the importance of empathy, understanding, and client feedback in addressing homelessness.

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.

WITNESS SESSION 3 – 13 JUNE 2024

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.

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 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 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.

WITNESS SESSION 4 – 18 JULY 2024

Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director of Central Services, introduced the item. The Select Committee heard from Sonia Stewart, Independent Domestic Violence Manager, and from Sultana Ahmed, Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA).

Sonia Stewart and Sultana Ahmed addressed the Select Committee providing an overview of the Hillingdon domestic advocacy service and highlighting its evolution over the past two years from focusing solely on high-risk victims of domestic abuse to now supporting victims across all levels of risk.

Members heard that the service now included a floating support side, catering to low and medium-risk victims, in addition to the high-risk interventions provided by the Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs). The team comprised 5 IDVAs and 3 floating support workers, offering both short-term crisis intervention and long-term support.

Officers raised concerns regarding the approach to housing for victims of domestic abuse. It was noted that victims presenting to housing were often asked about police involvement (which formed part of the enquiries the Council made when a victim approached the Council for assistance), which could influence the support they received. This was concerning as not all victims may involve the police for various reasons, including threats from the perpetrator.

The Committee heard that the requirement for documentation when seeking housing support posed a significant challenge for victims fleeing emergency situations. It was recognised that in such circumstances, victims may not have the ability to gather necessary identification documents, which were crucial for accessing housing support.

The challenges faced by victims of domestic abuse when seeking housing support were highlighted. Concerns were raised about the need to ask about police involvement, which may not always be present despite the occurrence of domestic abuse.

It was highlighted that victims fleeing domestic abuse were often offered accommodation far from their support systems, which could exacerbate their vulnerability. The Committee recognised the significant impact of relocating victims away from their jobs, families, communities, and children's schools, especially when they or their children had additional complex needs.

Members were informed that inconsistencies were reported by clients when approaching housing services for assistance, particularly concerning the advice given about the possibility of remaining within the Borough. The lack of clarity in policy or criteria used to determine why some victims stayed in Borough while others were relocated outside the Borough was highlighted as a matter needing further enquiry.

It was noted that while advising clients, there was a need to manage their expectations regarding potential housing outcomes. However, the inconsistency in the application of housing policies had led to confusion and the need for correct and effective guidance.

With regard to the Sanctuary Scheme, officers noted that the scheme assessed properties to implement additional security measures for victims of domestic abuse who wished to remain in their homes. There was a lack of clarity around time frames for referrals and responses. Automated messages to confirm receipt of referrals and inform clients of expected contact times would be welcomed.

In terms of staff turnover, the Committee was advised that there was a high turnover of staff within the housing team. Clients and advocates were not always informed about staff changes. The importance of consistent communication and updates for clients was highlighted. It was noted that some housing officers left their jobs without informing clients, leading to missed communications and unresolved issues.

In respect of appointments and Housing Reception, officers raised concerns about victims being turned away if they arrived without an appointment. There was a need for clear guidance on what reception staff should advise clients. Members heard that victims arriving at housing reception without an appointment were signposted to main reception where security could provide immediate assistance and an appointment made

Officers commented that it was vital to use professional interpreters for clients who did not speak English rather than relying on family members or children.

In respect of the Housing Reception environment, it was noted that this was not a welcoming place. Victims were at times obliged to spend the whole day there but there were no amenities for them and their children such as water, toys, and magazines to meet clients' needs. Clients were scared to leave for fear of missing their chance to speak to someone.

Members were informed that the working relationship with housing officers had improved since HDAAS had relocated to the Civic Centre. Officers worked proactively with housing colleagues and were able to communicate directly with housing officers to address concerns and discuss risks. However, the importance of consistent communication with housing officers, especially during staff changes was reiterated. Timely updates on case allocations were essential. At times, officers and clients received bounced back emails and notifications about staff changes when chasing up cases which was unhelpful.

With regards to Domestic Abuse training, Members heard that training had been offered to various departments within the Council but there had been a lack of response from housing managers. The importance of understanding victims' perceptions of risk and being supportive and believing their disclosures was highlighted - victims may be discouraged from seeking help if they felt disbelieved or unsupported.

Rachel Bulley, Social Prescribing Link Worker representing Colne Union PCN, NHS, addressed the Committee. Rachel began by explaining the concept of PCNs (Primary Care Networks), which were collections of GP surgeries that worked together within a network. Colne Union PCN represented the areas of West Drayton and Uxbridge. There were many social prescribers across the Borough of Hillingdon, each associated with different PCNs. The organisation they worked for was called Confederation Hillingdon, a CIC (Community Interest Company) based around healthcare.

Social prescribing was a relatively new role within the NHS, focusing on the social elements of a person's well-being. The NHS had traditionally focused on healthcare, but now there was a comprehensive approach to consider patients' social, practical, and well-being needs. Social prescribers received referrals from GPs, reception staff,

and even residents themselves. They assisted with a wide range of issues, including social isolation, housing problems, debt, finance issues, bereavement, and cancer care.

Rachel emphasised the importance of social prescribers understanding and being aware of local support and community services within Hillingdon. Integrated care was crucial, as gaps in services could lead to patients falling through the cracks and returning to primary care. Preventative support in primary care was essential to avoid escalation to secondary care. Social prescribers worked with local authorities, medical abuse charities, and other organisations to ensure residents were aware of and could access the services they needed.

Rachel expressed her support for the points raised by Sonia and Sultana regarding domestic abuse. Although social prescribers did not necessarily deal with domestic abuse directly, many of the issues raised were relevant to their work.

Members expressed concerns about the experience of victims of domestic abuse noting that some victims did not feel believed when they presented themselves to the housing department, which could lead them to return to their perpetrators. Councillors emphasised the importance of understanding the strength it took for a victim to disclose their situation and the negative impact of dismissive attitudes from housing staff. The ongoing effects of domestic abuse, including post-traumatic stress were highlighted; it was vital that support should not end once a victim left their home.

Officers echoed Members' concerns. The lack of empathy and understanding experienced by some patients in dire situations was noted. Examples of negative feedback included unsupportive questions about overcrowding. It was explained that social prescribers often found themselves stuck between patients and housing officers who did not connect with the humanistic side of patients. However, Rachel also mentioned that her organisation had been working with the transformation team in the housing department to bridge the gap between primary care and the local Housing Authority. Initiatives included Brightside Workshops for primary care staff, the potential creation of a new role within housing to act as a link between patients and housing, and the development of Q&A leaflets to address common patient questions. Training for housing staff to improve their understanding and handling of domestic abuse cases was of paramount importance.

Questions were invited from Members. One Councillor highlighted a concerning issue that had come to light during their visit to the housing reception / contact centre. They noted that the housing reception felt like a custody suite and questioned the process of directing individuals to the security desk. The Councillor expressed concern about the treatment of domestic abuse victims who presented at the housing reception without an appointment, questioning whether they were turned away or advised to go to the main reception to speak to security. They emphasised the need for clarity on this process and the training provided to security personnel, noting that interactions with security could be triggering for some victims.

Another Councillor enquired about integrated care within housing, particularly concerning homelessness caused by drug and alcohol abuse. They asked about the availability of detox facilities and mental health care services. Officers responded,

explaining that social prescribing in Hillingdon involved referring patients to ARCH, the main service for addiction support. They acknowledged capacity issues within ARCH and highlighted the role of mental health practitioners in triaging patients and providing support in primary or secondary care. They also mentioned ongoing neighbourhood projects addressing anxiety and depression.

The Committee thanked the officers for their presentation and acknowledged the concerns raised about communication and inconsistency of approach. They enquired about staff turnover and resource availability, asking how the Council could better support the officers' work. Officers explained that their service had grown stronger with additional staff and floating support workers. They shared statistics on high-risk referrals and emphasised the need for accessible counselling services for domestic abuse victims. They noted the challenges in finding counselling services due to long waiting lists.

The discussion continued with a focus on improving communication and coordination. Officers stressed the importance of having a single point of contact within the domestic abuse team to streamline communication and reduce the need for constant chasing. They highlighted the need for clear processes and better understanding of available schemes, such as the rent deposit scheme and local housing living allowance. Officers described the difficulties faced by patients in accessing these schemes and the vicious cycle of requirements and delays.

Councillors sought further clarity regarding the impact of housing issues on residents' mental health. Officers explained that housing crises significantly affected patients' mental health, often leading to resistance in accessing mental health services. They noted the gap between primary and secondary mental health services and the challenges in supporting patients with situational mental health issues. Officers emphasised the need for better communication and understanding of processes to support residents effectively.

Councillors and officers agreed on the importance of clear communication, accessible support services, and streamlined processes to better serve residents and address the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness and related issues.

Councillors sought recommendations from officers regarding improvements to the service and emphasised the importance of understanding how the service could be improved.

Officers provided an update on the current progress. They mentioned that, slowly but surely, improvements were being made, particularly through collaboration with the transformation team and housing departments. Officers highlighted the involvement of key individuals, such as Fola and Reginald, in integrating services. They discussed the potential benefits of having a single point of contact to provide patient support and information. Officers emphasised the importance of a two-way relationship between housing officers and their team, where both parties supported each other. They also mentioned ongoing roadshows aimed at educating residents about housing expectations and processes. Officers stressed the need for clear communication and support for residents, avoiding confusing jargon.

Members thanked the officers for their hard work and acknowledged the importance of scrutinising the service's effectiveness. They sought further clarification regarding the experiences of counterparts in other boroughs and whether there were any best practices that could be adopted.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed that housing departments across different boroughs faced similar issues, particularly in supporting domestic abuse victims with empathy and without unnecessary scrutiny. They shared examples of gatekeeping and the challenges faced by victims in accessing support. Officers mentioned that colleagues from other boroughs, such as Hounslow, experienced similar issues. They highlighted the difficulties in signposting clients to other boroughs for emergency accommodation and the lack of communication and consistency in support. The Committee was advised of the challenges in accessing refuge spaces for victims and the need for better coordination.

A representative from the public health team offered to provide data on homelessness profiles against comparator sites via other boroughs. They mentioned that the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) held relevant data and could assist the Committee in understanding the broader context.

Councillors expressed interest in having sight of said data and emphasised the importance of understanding the current standing to effectively improve the service. They also enquired about support from other bodies, such as the Greater London Authority (GLA), and whether additional support had been requested. Officers acknowledged that they had not asked for additional support from other bodies but indicated that it might be beneficial.

The Committee enquired about the process of relocating clients out of the Borough and whether they remained with the service or were transferred to the local authority in the new area. It was confirmed that clients relocated out of the Borough were referred to the domestic abuse service in the new area. If children were involved, a transfer to the new area's children social care team would be arranged. Members heard that some clients returned to their original area due to familiarity and support networks.

Members raised concerns about the lack of communication when high-risk cases moved back to the Borough and the potential gaps in support. They also highlighted the need for an in-house counselling service for both victims and staff, given the emotional toll of their work.

In response to this, officers agreed with the need for clinical supervision and support for team members who regularly dealt with harrowing accounts of violence. They emphasised the importance of having someone independent to offload to and discuss their experiences.

Dan Kennedy, the Corporate Director of Central Services thanked the Chair and everyone for their contributions. He provided context on the current tough environment, noting that the number of housing needs approaches had increased by about 28% since 2019, with 120 to 140 approaches every week. He highlighted the compounded challenges due to rising mortgage interest rates, increasing rents, and

landlords exiting the market. Mr Kennedy emphasised the support from the Cabinet, which had invested in acquiring 300 extra properties and working with housing associations to increase housing supply by an additional 300 properties this year compared to last year, rising to 500 homes over the next three years.

The Corporate Director of Central Services also mentioned that the changes made over the last year had reduced the number of placements into temporary accommodation by 10% compared to the previous year. He stressed the importance of preventing homelessness to provide stable and secure housing for families, which lead to better outcomes for children. He noted a 7% drop in the number of households living in the highest cost temporary accommodation since mid-April, with no families in commercial hotels and no families with children living in shared accommodation for more than six weeks.

Mr Kennedy acknowledged the need for consistency and mentioned efforts to strengthen staff training. He discussed the challenges of handling referrals from other boroughs and the importance of asking the right questions with empathy. He expressed the intention to reinstate a model with dedicated officers for domestic abuse cases to build expertise and empathy. The importance of having champions for other services, such as hospital discharge, and the need for a triage function to handle cases effectively was highlighted.

The Committee was appraised of the importance of relationships with private landlords and the need to increase the supply of private rented sector accommodation. The Corporate Director recognised the pressure on staff and mentioned efforts to strengthen welfare arrangements and supervision policies. He discussed the need to improve communication with residents, including making letters more understandable and providing clear explanations from housing officers. Moreover, he addressed the appointment process for housing needs reception, noting the importance of safety for staff and the need to improve the system to provide a better customer experience. He mentioned ongoing work with the corporate management team to make further improvements.

Officers expressed concern about the low number of domestic abuse referrals from housing. They questioned whether housing officers were referring victims to domestic abuse services and children's social care in the new boroughs when victims moved out of the Borough. The need for better coordination and communication to ensure that victims received the necessary support was highlighted.

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.

REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS AND THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY: UPDATE FROM COUNCIL OFFICERS ON IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY – 18 JULY 2024

Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director of Central Services, provided an update on the Housing Improvement Activity Plan to date. He emphasised that the plan addressed a wide range of issues related to homelessness and the customer journey. The plan included strategies and policies, workforce planning, and the importance of having more entry-level roles to build a permanent workforce. The challenges of recruiting

and retaining staff in this area and the need for a ladder of career progression within local government were highlighted. He also mentioned the importance of customer care and management supervision and providing support to staff dealing with traumatic casework.

Members were informed about the housing commissioning plan, which aimed to increase the number of properties and make the best use of existing housing stock. This included encouraging under-occupiers, both council tenants and housing association tenants, to downsize, acquiring more properties, and utilising the private rented sector. The plan set challenging but achievable targets to meet these goals.

The Select Committee heard that understanding the local housing market and its pressures was another key area of focus. It was believed that by understanding the market, the Council could predict and manage it more effectively. This included knowing which private sector landlords were evicting tenants and why and building relationships with them to prevent evictions. The importance of understanding the cost of temporary accommodation and prioritising the commissioning of new properties to help people move on or prevent homelessness were also emphasised.

The Corporate Director stressed the need for a proactive approach, building a plan and investment strategy to create a positive pipeline of housing supply. He also highlighted the value of strong working relationships within the Council and with other services, such as Children's Services and Adult Social Care. Good working relationships could help prevent homelessness and encourage families to accept accommodation offers.

Councillors were advised that the biggest challenge was responding to emergency accommodation needs, which often required finding immediate solutions. Preventing or avoiding on-the-day presentations was critical.

Councillors noted that since the review had started, every witness session had highlighted that some staff within the housing department lacked empathy. They enquired if any action was being taken to identify and address these staff members' communication issues. Members emphasised the importance of how questions were asked and sought clarity on the plan to address this issue.

In response to this, officers acknowledged the concern, agreeing that even one or two staff members lacking empathy could impact the level of customer care. They mentioned that communications with staff about expectations had been strengthened. Managers were shadowing staff during conversations with residents, and the officers themselves were listening to calls and attending contact centre calls regularly. The need for empathy and clarity in communication, even when solutions were not readily available was highlighted. Members heard that individuals who were less helpful had been identified and the concerns addressed. Training and conversations had been conducted.

Councillors commented that it would be beneficial for the Committee to hear about tangible changes over the next few months. They suggested adding a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to track improvements in staff empathy and communication.

Members enquired as to the percentage of properties expected to be lost due to the right to buy scheme. It was confirmed that approximately 50 properties were lost each year through right to buy, and this number fluctuated with market conditions. Members heard that the programme aimed to outpace this loss by targeting family-sized properties and properties suitable for downsizers.

Councillors raised a case where a resident had to present themselves to the Civic Centre due to the out-of-hours team lacking correct homeless prevention training. They enquired about the training being offered to the out-of-hours team. In response to this, it was confirmed that the out-of-hours officers were very experienced officers, but the particular issue raised was acknowledged. Officers mentioned that they were reviewing the out-of-hours service ensure a resilient team was in place and ensure that staff were well-trained and knowledgeable about referral processes and thresholds.

The Select Committee sought further clarification as to whether the efforts being taken to reduce the number of homeless families in high-cost temporary accommodation included asylum seekers who had become homeless after being evicted from hotels. It was confirmed that Hillingdon had a high number of asylum seekers placed by the Home Office in the Borough and that officers were lobbying for more time to find solutions for those leaving hotels. Members were informed that single adults placed by the Home Office did not attract priority need unless they were vulnerable, but they were offered advice and support to secure their own accommodation. Officers emphasised the need for more funding to provide support for asylum seekers and mentioned that they were being proactive in managing expectations and finding solutions.

Councillors enquired whether the duration of temporary accommodation would decrease as more houses were bought. The Corporate Director acknowledged the challenge but stated that increasing the supply of private rented sector accommodation, social rented affordable housing, and stronger prevention and mediation efforts would help reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation. He emphasised the mission to reduce homelessness and move families out of temporary accommodation as quickly as possible.

In response to questions about outbound functions in workforce planning, it was explained that outbound functions involved training staff to undertake visits and engage with residents empathetically. Officers also highlighted the importance of supporting staff at all stages, providing strong supervision, and ensuring manageable caseloads to retain staff.

Members sought further clarification regarding the alleged lack of empathy among some staff members. They acknowledged that asking difficult questions was a challenging job and that some people may be more or less offended by these questions. They also noted that the process could be dehumanizing, given the repetitive exposure to terrible situations. However, Members emphasised the need for evidence-based retraining and enquired if all conversations were recorded so that managers could review them.

In response to this it was confirmed that not all conversations were recorded. Nevertheless, managers often supported staff by attending and coaching them before challenging conversations with residents. The Corporate Director mentioned that experienced housing officers were paired with less experienced ones to discuss scenarios and questions that might arise. Staff who needed extra help, due to complaints or concerns, were supported through training, conversations, and shadowing if necessary.

Members expressed agreement on the importance of seeing tangible results and noted that, while the plan contained many good elements, it was unclear what was already in place and what was planned. They mentioned that the language used in the plan was somewhat management-oriented and difficult to understand. Councillors sought clarity on how the plan was translating into tangible outcomes, given that similar themes were still being reported by witnesses. They also highlighted the importance of staff support, referencing witness testimony about the need for staff to have breaks from hearing harrowing stories. Councillors requested more specific details about staff welfare support in the plan, emphasising the need to encourage staff to remain with the Council and continue their valuable work.

RESOLVED: That the Select Committee reviewed and noted the ongoing improvement works and the improvement this would have on the resident experience when approaching for housing advice and support.

WITNESS SESSION 5 – 24 SEPTEMBER 2024

Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director of Central Services and Melissa Blower, Housing Programme Manager, introduced the report on the Select Committee's ongoing Review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey. Colleagues from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) were also in attendance to provide information about the services provided by CAB and to answer Members' questions in relation to this.

Jas Nagra, Citizen's Advice Service Manager at CAB informed Members that she had been with the service for 12 years. Joanna Smith, Citizen's Advice Senior Adviser at CAB was also in attendance and mentioned that she had been working as an Adviser for over 20 years and had recently completed a housing advance project funded by Nationwide.

Members heard that Housing Advice currently sat within core services at CAB but a funder was being sought to enable CAB to provide bespoke housing advice. Ms Smith highlighted the high demand for housing advice and the challenges faced due to limited resources. She praised the Council's housing officers for their knowledge and ability to manage expectations but also pointed out issues with communication and responsiveness. An example was cited of one particular client who had submitted a housing application. It was reported that the local authority had closed the application because the client had allegedly not responded to an email within the 24 hours allocated to submit additional evidence. It was claimed that the additional evidence had been provided within the deadline. Concerns were raised regarding a lack of cooperation to resolve issues that arose.

Ms Smith shared her experience of submitting complaints to the housing service through the standard local authority complaint procedures; none of which had been successful. She emphasised the need for better cooperation and responsiveness when things went wrong. It was alleged that, the higher CAB went within the LBH complaints process, the less expert and knowledgeable were the responses. The Committee was informed that, if complaints were unresolved at stages 1 and 2, the next step was to contact the Housing Ombudsman, but this was a lengthy process – processing times could reach up to 12 months.

The Corporate Director of Central Services acknowledged the feedback and mentioned the need for a stronger relationship with partners like the Citizens Advice Bureau. He proposed regular meetings to address issues more effectively and improve communication. He also committed to checking on the complaints mentioned by the representatives of CAB.

In response to questions from Councillors regarding the need for a CAB base in Hayes, officers from CAB confirmed that they were in support of this suggestion and would appreciate any assistance in securing a permanent office base at the One Stop Shop in Hayes.

Members enquired about the primary barriers faced by the Citizens Advice Bureau and how the Council could revise its policies to remove these obstacles. In response to this, the CAB officers outlined the importance of managing expectations as many members of the public were unaware of the reality of the housing crisis. It was recognised that this would take time.

Councillors highlighted the need for better communication and empathy from housing officers. It was confirmed that some housing officers and Councillors were more responsive than others. CAB officers highlighted concerns with the new homelessness application process suggesting that it was not fit for purpose and noting that, if an application were closed through no fault of the client, it could not be reopened or reinstated. Clients needed to submit a new application which was a lengthy and complex process - this was particularly challenging for those clients who were not digitally capable. It was noted that the CAB then had to spend time helping these clients to submit a new form when they could be helping someone else.

Members noted that some clients tried to find ways around the housing system which could in the end be detrimental to their case, e.g. those who presented as homeless in order to get a different property or move band. Officers confirmed that CAB aimed to offer clients all the options open to them. It was acknowledged that the situation was sometimes complex, and the immigration status of some clients was particularly complicated.

The Select Committee suggested that it would be helpful if the Citizens Advice Bureau could be provided with the contact details of the chief whips to ensure Councillors responded appropriately to requests for information or assistance.

In response to further questions from Members, the CAB confirmed that better communication from housing services was crucial. Regular meetings with housing officers would also be beneficial.

With regard to the alleged unhelpful responses from some housing officers, further training was recommended, particularly for those at a higher level who were responsible for responding to complaints.

The need for better communication and cooperation between the Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau to improve the customer journey for those experiencing homelessness was emphasised. The Corporate Director of Central Services agreed to follow up on individual complaints identified by the CAB. He recognised the need for stronger relationships with partners and committed to regular meetings with the Citizens Advice Bureau and other partners to address issues more effectively and improve the working relationship. He also confirmed that he met with the housing team on a weekly basis to address any issues. It was noted that good customer care and good customer experience were extremely important.

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

Feedback further to Councillor site visits to the contact centre and main / housing reception areas as part of the Review

Main Reception

- The main reception area was found to be somewhat unwelcoming.
- To improve security, pass-swipes were suggested.
- Improved signposting was recommended. An electronic check in system was also suggested for those with appointments.
- An area for children would be beneficial.
- It was noted that toilets needed to be signposted better.
- The telephone area lacked privacy - screening would be welcomed.

Contact centre – housing calls

- The call handlers were found to be excellent, but contacting back-office staff was challenging at times.
- Call handlers sometimes contacted housing officers via Teams hence the conversation was not recorded.
- An improved handover plan when housing officers were on leave / had left the Council was required.

Housing Reception

- A staff dress code was suggested.
- The Housing Reception area did not appear welcoming or friendly.
- Security needed to be reviewed.
- Improved signposting was suggested.

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE - CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer
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 Residents' Services Select Committee notes 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>

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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Ref	Scheduled Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly											
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 9 January 2025 (report deadline 4 December 2024)											
261	Temporary Accommodation Strategy & Action Plan	Cabinet will consider a strategy and action plan to reduce the expenditure on temporary accommodation and make any necessary decisions in relation to the matter.	N/A		Cllr Steve Tuckwell - Planning, Housing & Growth / Cllr Jonathan Bianco - Corporate Services & Property	Residents' Services	Dan Kennedy	Dan Kennedy	Corporate Management Team	NEW ITEM	Public
254	The supply of grounds maintenance machinery	Cabinet will be asked to consider a report for the supply of grounds maintenance machinery for the Councils' green spaces team to maintain borough the parks, open spaces and gardens	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Robert Cox / Allison Mayo	Karrie Whelan			Private (3)
260a	Early review of current Public Spaces Protection Order 2023	Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) are reviewed every 3 years, the last being in 2023. This report to Cabinet proposes the early review of the current PSPO in effect and to also capture emerging proposals for new conditions or restrictions. Cabinet will be requested to agree a revised PSPO for public consultation and to receive a further report back on the outcome before decisions are made.	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Joanne Howells / Stephanie Waterford	Dan Kennedy			Public
223b	Taxi control measures around Heathrow Airport	Cabinet will consider the outcome of the consultation, agreed by Cabinet in September, on proposals to control private hire vehicles (taxis) in residential streets around Heathrow Airport and then consider the necessary decisions required.	Heathrow Villages		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Richard Webb / Stephanie Waterford	Dan Kennedy	Statutory consultation		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	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - January 2025											
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	Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 13 February 2025 (report deadline 22 January 2025)											

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions		Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI = Standard Item each month/regularly											
SI	2025/26 Budget and Future Medium-Term Financial Strategy (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 2025/26 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 - 20 February 2025	Cllr Ian Edwards - Leader of the Council / Cllr Martin Goddard - Finance & Transformation	All	Andy Goodwin	Richard Ennis	Public consultation through the Select Committee process and statutory consultation with businesses & ratepayers		Public
238	The provision of a specialist grounds maintenance, horticultural and landscaping contract	Cabinet will be asked to consider the award of a grounds maintenance, horticultural and landscaping contract for a period of three years with optional extension of a further two years. This contract will support works required by the Green Spaces Team in its parks, gardens and open public spaces and can also be utilised by other Council departments.	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Robert Cox / Allison Mayo	Karrie Whelan			Private (3)
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	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - February 2025											
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	Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 13 March 2025 (report deadline 19 February)											
189	Cowley House, Uxbridge	Following consultation with residents, Cabinet will consider the decant and disposal of Cowley House, 181 Cowley High Road Uxbridge UB8 2AJ. Cowley House is a small general needs housing block and a listed building. Cabinet will be advised that it is not viable to bring the property up to the new Landlord Compliance standards, hence the recommendation to dispose of the property.	Uxbridge		Cllr Jonathan Bianco - Corporate Services & Property	Residents' Services	Julie Markwell	Karrie Whelan			Private (3)

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions		Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	Strategic Climate Action Plan	Hillingdon Council passed a Climate Change Declaration at its full Council meeting on 16 January 2020 which set out the ambition to become carbon neutral across the Council's services by 2030. Following a review and comprehensive public consultation on the updated Action Plan, Cabinet will consider the response and agree a Plan for 2025-2028.	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Ian Thynne	Karrie Whelan	Public Consultation / Residents' Services Select Committee		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	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - March 2025											
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	Democratic Services		Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 10 April 2025 (report deadline 19 March)											
260b	Early review of current Public Spaces Protection Order 2023	Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) are reviewed every 3 years, the last being in 2023. Subject to Cabinet agreeing to consult on a revised PSPO in January, this report will consider the outcome of that, before a final decision on PSPOs is approved.	All		Cllr Eddie Lavery - Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Joanne Howells / Stephanie Waterford	Dan Kennedy			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	Democratic Services	N/A			Public
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	TBC	TBC		Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - April 2025											
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	Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - Thursday 22 May 2025 (report deadline 30 April)											

Ref	Scheduled Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	Various		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	Various		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	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - May 2025											
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	Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - June 2025 (date TBC)											
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	TBC		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - June 2025											
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		C - Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public
Cabinet meeting - July 2025 (date TBC)											
SI	Reports from Select Committees	Reports, findings and recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet, when referred from the appropriate Committee.	All		All	TBC	Democratic Services	N/A	TBC		Public
SI	Public Preview of matters to be considered in private	A report to Cabinet to provide maximum transparency to residents on the private matters to be considered later in Part 2 of the Cabinet meeting and agenda.	TBC		All Cabinet Members	All	Democratic Services	TBC			Public
Cabinet Member Decisions expected - July 2025											
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		Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public

SI = Standard Item each month/regularly

Ref	Scheduled Upcoming Decisions	Further details	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
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SI = Standard Item each month/regularly

AUGUST 2025 - NO CABINET MEETING

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	Democratic Services	TBC	Various		Public
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CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS: Standard Items (SI) that may be considered each month

Page 85	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	TBC		TBC		Public / Private
	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 & Transformation (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	Democratic Services				Public
	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 & Transformation / in conjunction with relevant Cabinet Member	TBC	various				Private (3)

Scheduled Upcoming Decisions			Further details		Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Relevant Select Committee	Report Author	Corporate Director Responsible	Consultation related to the decision	NEW ITEM	Public or Private (with reason)
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	Chrysalis Programme of Environmental Improvements	The Cabinet Member will be asked to consider the approval of projects.	Various		Cllr Eddie Community & Environment	Residents' Services	Neil O'Connor						Public
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	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		All	TBC	various						Public

SI = Standard Item each month/regularly

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RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer
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.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Residents' Services Select Committee considers the Work Programme report 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
13 June 2024	CR5
18 July 2024	CR6
24 September 2024	CR6
27 November 2024	CR5
14 January 2025	CR5
19 February 2025	CR5
13 March 2025	CR5
22 April 2025	CR5

Site Visits

Members of the Residents' Services Select Committee have undertaken a number of site visits to include the CCTV room in the Civic Centre, Harlington Road Depot, Heathrow Imported Food Office, Hillingdon Fire Station, Botwell Leisure Centre, Breakspear Crematorium, the Recycling Centre at Edmonton and a visit with the Noise Team.

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.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

MULTI-YEAR WORK PROGRAMME 2022 - 2026

	2024/25							2025/26								
	March 13	April 16	May No meeting	June 13	July 18	September 24	November 27	January 14	February 19	March 13	April 22	May No meeting	June TBC	July TBC	September TBC	November TBC
Residents' Services Select Committee																
Review: Homeless Prevention and the Customer Journey																
Topic selection / scoping stage																
Witness / evidence / consultation stage																
Findings, conclusions and recommendations																
Final review report agreement																
Target Cabinet reporting																
Regular service & performance monitoring																
Infrastructure Funding Statement Update (previously CIL Expenditure Monitoring - Annual Report & S106) each November																
Mid-year budget / budget planning report																
Strategic Climate Action Plan: Consultation & then Annual Reviews thereafter (to move to November annually to align with Cabinet reporting in October)																
Cabinet's Budget Proposals For Next Financial Year																
Cabinet Forward Plan Monthly Monitoring																
Parking Annual Report																
Annual Complaints Submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service (Rod Smith/Debbie W)																
One-off information items																
ASB Service Update (with updated FPN figures)																
Graffiti Removal																
Sports - facilities, engagement & inclusivity																
Animal Welfare																
Consultation on Uxbridge Master Plan																
Housing Allocation Policy Consultation Draft																
Heathrow Expansion																
Abandoned Vehicles																
Regeneration of Town Centres (Chambers of Commerce, Hayes T Partnership, Uxb BID)																
Success of Chrysalis Project																
Trading Standards - Tackling Underage Drinking / Vaping																
Licensing of Fun Fairs and enforcement measures available for flyposting																
Community Payback Scheme - structure of the Scheme																
Noise Team Structure, success of enforcement measures and update on site visit																
Review of Statement of Gambling Policy - policy framework consultation																
Sport for Young People - how the Council encourages participation in deprived areas																
APCOA Parking Enforcement - income / contract cost (Freddie Mohammed)																
Crime & Disorder - Statutory Scrutiny (themed)																
Safer Hillingdon Partnership Development																
Safer Hillingdon Partnership Performance																
Past review delivery																
Review of Alley Gating																
Review of Empty Homes Council Tax Premium																
Internal use only																
Report deadline	1 Mar	29 Mar		3 Jun	8 Jul	12 Sep	15 Nov									
Agenda publication date	5 Mar	2 Apr		5 Jun	10 Jul	16 Sep	19 Nov									

Committee Site Visits
CCTV Control Room, Civic Centre (25 July 2022 and 4 November 2024)
Botwell Leisure Centre (27 February 2024)
Harlington Road Depot (28 September 2022)
Weed Killing Contractor (6 June 2023)
Heathrow Airport (Imported Food Office) (4 October 2022)
Out of Hours Noise Team (1 November 2024)
Hillingdon Fire Station (7 December 2022)
Graffiti Removal
Breakspear Crematorium (25 January 2023)
Harefield and Yiewsley Civic Amenity Sites
Traffic wardens / Abandoned Vehicles *
Canal Visit - 1 November 2023
The Battle of Britain Bunker (26 July 2023 at 6pm)
Building Control
Planning Enforcement
HS2 Site Visit
Dogs Trust
Edmonton Recycling Centre (Tuesday 4 September 2024 - 09:45 - 10:45)
Custody Suite - Polar Park, Heathrow
Uxbridge / Ruislip Lido

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