

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

13 March 2025



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), Janet Gardner and Kamal Preet Kaur</p> <p>Others Present: Councillor Eddie Lavery Joanne Howells – Street Scene Enforcement Service Manager Natasha Norton (Community Projects Officer) Neil O'Connor (Community Projects Officer) Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer) Richard Webb (Director Community Safety & Enforcement) Chief Inspector Ben Wright – Metropolitan Police</p>
58.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
59.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
60.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING DATED 19 FEBRUARY 2025 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that there were a number of outstanding action points from the previous meeting's minutes. It was agreed that these would be followed up on outside the meeting and updates circulated to Committee Members. The minutes were agreed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 19 February 2025 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
61.	<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>
62.	<p>SAFER HILLINGDON PARTNERSHIP REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Richard Webb, Director of Community Safety and Enforcement and Chief Inspector Ben Wright were in attendance to present the information in the report and respond to Members' questions.</p>

Members were provided with an overview of recent activities under the Safer Hillingdon Partnership, which focused on practical improvements such as a cuckooing protocol to support vulnerable residents and a crime and disorder survey to inform the community safety strategy.

The Chief Inspector provided a police update, highlighting key issues affecting policing, including a budget deficit leading to paused recruitment and reduced officer numbers, challenges with prisoner releases, court backlogs, and increased demand from immigration removal centres and hotels.

Members were informed that the figures set out in the report were somewhat skewed as Heathrow airport data had been included in the Hillingdon crime figures. This was an IT blip which would be rectified for future reporting.

Despite these challenges, it was noted that there had been successes in reducing homicide, violence with injury and violence against women and girls. The Committee heard that there had been a short-term spike in knife crime and burglary particularly in Ruislip and West Drayton; 3 people had now been charged with 45 aggravated burglaries. The Chief Inspector also mentioned the significant reduction in theft from motor vehicles, hate crime and the high detection rate for shoplifting. It was reported that there was a focus on driving down bike thefts.

Members asked about the statistical impact of prisoner releases and policing cuts in Hillingdon. The Chief Inspector replied that Government research indicated that 25% of people released from prison reoffended within one year and 55% within three years. Anecdotally, the Chief Inspector confirmed that released prisoners were reoffending, and the range of crimes varied.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that the crime figures included any institutions within the Hillingdon footprint, including Hillingdon Hospital, Riverside, and the Immigration Centre.

Councillors asked about the number of current vacancies in the BCU and the adequacy of officer numbers. The Chief Inspector replied that the resourcing picture was healthy, with vacancies being held elsewhere, and emphasised the prioritisation of frontline BCUs.

The Committee enquired about the expected loss of officers over the next 12 to 18 months due to retirement, sickness, or injury. It was clarified that the 1800 officers were for Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon BCU, and Borough resourcing would be prioritised despite the budget gap.

Members raised concerns about the decrease in reporting of violence against women and girls and the lack of trust in the police. The Chief Inspector acknowledged the challenges and emphasised the importance of prioritising public protection and improving victim care. It was confirmed that outreach work in local communities was being undertaken to increase police visibility.

Councillors asked whether officers emphasised that rape was a crime during community engagements. In response, it was confirmed that officers delivered that message during engagements.

Reassurance in relation to the high crime figures in Heathrow Villages Ward was

sought by the Committee noting that local residents had raised concerns about this. It was explained that the majority of crimes recorded in Heathrow Villages were technical issues related to Heathrow Airport figures.

Members asked about the effectiveness of ward panels. The Chief Inspector replied that ward panels ranged from good to very good and emphasised the importance of driving learning among chairs and officers.

The Committee noted that some residents had lost trust in the police and questioned the accuracy of crime statistics. The Chief Inspector acknowledged the complexity of the issue and emphasised the importance of public understanding of the broader criminal justice system. He noted that reporting of crime in Hillingdon was increasing, and public confidence in the Police was higher than in many other boroughs.

Members asked about the impact of closure orders. It was explained that closure orders had a positive impact and could be extended if necessary.

Councillors sought further information about the Community monitoring groups mentioned in the report. The Chief Inspector explained that these groups were run by the Independent Advisory Group and that they reviewed body-worn video footage of stop and search incidents. Members asked about the advertising of community monitoring groups and the impact of the £200 threshold for shoplifting. The process was clarified, and the importance of criminal behaviour orders was highlighted.

Further to Members' questions regarding the local crime prevention fund, the grant process was explained, and it was confirmed that the funding had been sustained at the same level for the next four years.

Members enquired about the increase in cuckooing cases and the crime survey. The Director of Community Safety and Enforcement explained the new protocol for reporting cuckooing and the ongoing crime survey which was open until the end of March 2025. It was reported that approximately 500 responses had been received to date and this information would help officers focus their efforts accordingly to achieve the biggest impact.

Councillors asked about youth engagement and crime statistics. The Chief Inspector explained the youth advisory group and confirmed that Hillingdon had less crime per head of population compared to other areas in London.

The Committee raised concerns about educating residents about cuckooing. In response, the Chief Inspector and Director of Community Safety and Enforcement emphasised the importance of reporting concerns and the mechanisms in place for sharing information.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the contents of the reports and asked questions in order to clarify matters of concern or interest in the Borough.

63. **COMMUNITY PAYBACK SCHEME** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Joanne Howells, Street Scene Enforcement Service Manager, was in attendance to answer Members' questions in respect of the Community Payback Scheme. Apologies were received from Richard Copeland, representative of the Probation Service, who

had been invited but was unable to attend.

Members asked if there were any payback schemes planned for the north of the Borough, as all listed projects seemed to be in the south. The officer replied affirmatively, stating that the Community payback scheme was open to all areas of the Borough. It was noted that at present there were 11 projects across the Borough with 13 sessions per week, completing 1185 hours of community service in February 2025 alone.

In response to Councillors' questions regarding ideas for community payback schemes, such as painting bridges in Ruislip, it was confirmed that both Members and residents could report projects centrally through the Government website or directly to the Streets Scene Enforcement team.

Councillors asked for the number of participants in the payback scheme. It was explained that each project involved a maximum of five people supervised on-site, with repeat projects arranged as needed.

Councillors asked if the payback scheme covered canals. It was confirmed that it did, provided officers engaged with the Canals and Rivers Trust.

The Committee sought further clarification regarding the rehabilitation rates of participants. Officers did not have the information to hand but agreed to follow this up with probation services.

Members suggested that community payback participants should work in areas where they had committed crimes. It was agreed that officers would follow this up with the Probation Service. Members heard that the scheme was currently utilised for both private and unregistered alleyways.

The Committee enquired why Councillors now had to go through the Government website in order to submit project nominations. It was clarified that, if preferred, Members could still submit their nominations directly to the Street Enforcement Team who would in turn engage with the Community Payback team. Regarding the delay in reintroducing the scheme post-COVID, it was explained that officers had been approached by the Probation Service in April 2024 and had since reintroduced the process.

In response to further questions from Members, it was confirmed that the scheme had been used to maintain empty properties in the past 12 months, following legislative procedures and risk assessments. Officers had access to a live list of empty properties across the Borough and would explore the possibility of planning ahead.

It was confirmed that no adverse reports or concerns in respect of the Community Payback Scheme had been received to date.

In respect of savings to the Council resulting from the use of the Community Payback Scheme, Members heard that it was not possible to confirm this at present given the newness of the scheme. The scheme would be reviewed in approximately 12 months' time to establish its cost effectiveness.

Councillors asked if any form of training or job opportunities had been offered to payback participants to date. Officers confirmed that they were not aware of any such initiatives, noting that the project was relatively new.

Finally, Members asked about transportation issues between Harrow and the Borough. It was confirmed that the scheme was now more locally based and had not encountered any transportation problems.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the information in the report and provided any feedback to officers.

64. **THE HILLINGDON COUNCIL CHRYSALIS SCHEME** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Natasha Norton and Neil O'Connor were in attendance to answer Members' questions regarding the Chrysalis Scheme. Councillor Eddie Lavery, Cabinet Member for Community and Environment was also in attendance.

Members asked about match funding and whether opportunities to work with local businesses had been explored for projects costing over £100,000. It was confirmed that the responsibility to raise additional funds lay with the applicants, and the Council would not have the resources to find additional money.

Councillors enquired about feedback mechanisms for rejected applications, and it was explained that applications outside published criteria were rejected, while those with potential for future funding were held in reserve.

The Committee asked how the match funding concept was advertised to community groups. Officers responded that applicants were asked to provide estimates of required funding, and the Council investigated options if more funding was needed.

Members questioned how the scheme was advertised and suggested more publicity in the southern part of the Borough. The Cabinet Member noted that the scheme had been widely promoted in Hillingdon People. However, it was agreed that more could be done to publicise the scheme and ensure all communities were aware of it.

The Committee asked if inflation was considered in the funding amounts. It was confirmed that the budget had not increased, and it was rarely possible to make exceptions regarding the £100,000 limit.

In response to queries about diversity data on applicants, Members were informed that, while detailed diversity data was not collected, information on community usage was considered. It was confirmed that information about the scheme was available in other languages.

Members sought further clarification regarding the criteria for selecting projects. The Cabinet Member detailed the process, which included reading all applications, considering recommendations, and ensuring a spread of projects across the Borough. It was confirmed that data detailing previous funding provided to organisations was also taken into consideration.

The Committee asked how applicants knew the cost of projects when filling in their applications. It was explained that applicants provided estimates, and the Council conducted research to verify costs.

With regard to lead times for projects, Members were informed that applications were reviewed annually, and projects were generally completed within the financial year. It was confirmed that S106 monies could not be used for Chrysalis projects.

At the request of the Committee, it was agreed that a briefing note for Councillors to help them engage with community groups would be prepared by officers.

The need for more information to be provided to communities that might be missing out was emphasised. Officers highlighted the criteria for funding Council-owned assets only.

It was noted that Ward Budget allocations were also available to Members. It was confirmed that some Councillors were using these good effect while others were not.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the information provided and submitted any comments to the Cabinet Member for consideration.

65. **MONITORING - UPDATE ON THE RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF ALLEY GATING IN HILLINGDON** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Natasha Norton and Neil O'Connor, Community Projects Officers, were in attendance to answer Members' questions further to the Committee's review of the Council's alley gating scheme.

Members sought further clarification regarding the promotion of the alley gating scheme in Hillingdon People. It was confirmed that one article had already been published (as set out in Appendix C to the report). Another article was in the pipeline. The corporate communications team was preparing to release the next article in the near future.

In response to Councillors' questions regarding fly-tipping it was explained that fly-tipping within the gated alleys was likely to have emanated from residents, as these were privately owned alleyways. It was clarified that residents were responsible for maintaining these areas. With regard to flytipping outside the gates, residents were encouraged to report any such incidents to the anti-social behaviour team.

Members sought further clarification in respect of feedback from residents regarding the two schemes installed six months ago. It was explained that, while the Council could chase feedback, residents often did not provide it after the gates were installed. The Council was waiting for the schemes to reach the six-month or twelve-week mark to gather feedback.

Members suggested that officers could engage with local SNT teams to gather feedback on the success of the schemes. It was agreed that this was a viable option, and it was noted that the Council had close connections with SNT during the initial installation of the gates.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the updates regarding the Alley Gating Scheme following the Select Committee review that took place in 2023.

66.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
67.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members requested specific information from the previous year's parking annual report for comparison at the next meeting in April. Democratic Services to follow up.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the need for more regular updates on the budget to ensure costs were kept under control. It was confirmed that senior officers would provide monthly reports on cost savings and efficiency progress.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.47 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.