

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

7 December 2010



Meeting held at Committee Room 4a - Civic
Centre, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Michael Markham (Chairman), Shirley Harper-O'Neil (Vice-Chairman), Judy Kelly, Phoday Jarjussey, June Nelson and Susan O'Brien.</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Ed Shaylor (Senior Manager Community Safety, LBH) Liam Kenny (Vice chair, Community & Police Consultative Group) Safer Neighbourhoods Team Officers (Townfield SNT).</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Natasha Dogra (Democratic Services)</p>	
10.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Cllr Janet Duncan. Cllr Phoday Jarjussey substituted.</p>	Action by
11.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>	Action by
12.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items on the agenda were marked Part 1 and therefore considered in public.</p>	Action by
13.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2010 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The Committee agreed that minutes of 16 November 2010 were an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	Action by
14.	<p>KHAT WITNESS SESSION 4 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed the witnesses: Ed Shaylor (Senior Manager Community Safety, LBH), Liam Kenny (Vice chair, Community & Police Consultative Group) and Safer Neighbourhoods Team Officers (Townfield SNT).</p> <p>Officers said there were two main elements of anti-social behaviour</p>	Action by

related to Khat: domestic violence and public nuisance. The recent closure of Khat houses in Hayes had been related to public nuisance such as spitting, urinating in public, heavy traffic, parking related problems and noise pollution. Since the closure of these houses in March 2010 only one house has reopened, but so far no problems had been reported. Officers informed the Committee that the Khat houses were shut down due to the public nuisance issues, and not due to the fact that Khat was being consumed here as it was a legal activity.

Officers informed the Committee that they did not have hard facts relating to domestic violence linked to Khat use, as most of their findings were anecdotal. Many women who experienced this did not report it due to the stigma attached to it. Officers said that Hillingdon Hospital's Riverside Unit for mental health sufferers had taken in people who had used Khat and now suffered from schizophrenia and various other mental health issues. Officers believed that the mental health issues arose from the social disengagement and insomnia attached to Khat use.

Officers said the profile of something attending a Khat house was male, Somali, aged between 20 and 40. Older generations of Khat users would sit in the house and consume Khat for long periods of time and usually overnight. Younger generations would congregate outside the Khat houses to use illegal drugs such as Cannabis, and may also consume alcohol. As drugs are illegal in their religion the younger generations would attend Khat houses to perform these activities away from their own homes. It was usually these people who created the nuisance, not the older generations using Khat inside the house.

Heavy Khat users would chew Khat in the house, and then return to their own home to sleep during the day. These users would be isolated from the normal world, and would usually be unemployed. The routines of these users would usually lead to problems, not the actual Khat chewing, although Khat had been linked to mental health issues, high blood pressure, insomnia, lack of appetite and tooth decaying.

Officers informed the Committee that they had stopped some Khat users driving whilst high from Khat, but as Khat use was legal they could not enforce any laws on this activity.

Although Khat has been seen as a cultural habit Officers told the Committee that it was frowned upon and had only become accepted as the older generations used it. Only sub-cultures within the Somali community used Khat.

Officers said banning Khat would cause the problem to go underground and cause the price of Khat to skyrocket. Health warnings needed to be attached to it, along with regulation. The Committee asked whether classification of the substance would help this, and Officers agreed it would. Currently Khat was not classified as anything and without this classification it could not be regulated. However, the Officers unanimously agreed that classifying Khat as a vegetable or food stuff would rubberstamp the UK's approval of it and deem it fit for human consumption, which was not the case. The chemical component of the

	<p>plant was itself illegal, and extraction of these chemicals was an illegal activity but was taking place in the UK.</p> <p>Officers said if the plant was made illegal the chemical components could be extracted and made into other substances such as drinks and sweets which could then be consumed, therefore negating the banning effect. However, as Khat was a social activity it was the chewing of the plant which allowed the users to gather together for long periods of time and chew Khat, so consuming the two active ingredients in perhaps pill form would not be a social activity and may phase out the cultural and social aspects of the two ingredients Cathonine and Cathine.</p> <p>Officers said the importation of Khat into the UK could be made illegal, however this would have a huge knock on effect for the Port of Entries. The Committee agreed that the classification of the two active ingredients in Khat would be beneficial, or the capping of the level of these active ingredients in Khat should be monitored.</p> <p>Officers highlighted that most of the people who did not want Khat banned were those who were making money from trading of Khat.</p> <p>The Committee thanked Officers for attending the meeting.</p> <p>Agreed: The Committee agreed that the next witness session would focus on National issues of Khat and would take place in January 2011.</p>	<p><i>Natasha Dogra DCEO</i></p>
15.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>To Note: The Committee noted the Forward Plan.</p>	<p>Action by</p>
16.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME 2010 (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Agreed: The Committee agreed the Work Programme.</p>	<p>Action by</p>
<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.00 pm.</p>		

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Natasha Dogra on 01895 277 488. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.