

Minutes

SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND HOUSING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

30 JANUARY 2013

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: Cllr Judith Cooper Cllr Peter Kemp Cllr David Benson Cllr Sukphal Brar Cllr Pat Jackson Cllr John Major Cllr Mary O'Connor Cllr Peter Curling</p>
	<p>OFFICERS PRESENT: Linda Sanders (Director Social Care, Health) Moirra Wilson (Deputy Director Social Care and Health) Neil Stubbings (Deputy Director of Housing, Residents Services) Steve Cross (Head of Finance, Social Care and Health) Andrew Thiedeman (Service Manager Mental Health) Ann Otesanya (Neighbourhood Housing Services Manager) Debbie Weller (Housing Strategy and Commissioning Service) Charles Francis (Democratic Services Officer)</p> <p><u>Also present:</u> Sandra Brookes (CNWL)</p>
33.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies Cllr June Nelson substitute Cllr Peter Curling</p>
34.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Cllr Peter Kemp declared non-pecuniary interests as a member of the Board of CNWL and as a member of the Trustees of Hillingdon MIND</p> <p>Cllr Mary O'Connor declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chairman of Hillingdon MIND.</p>
35.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MBER 2012 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Were agreed as an accurate record</p>
36.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED IN PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>All items were considered in Public</p>

37. FORWARD PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The Deputy Director of Housing, Residents Services provided an overview of the following reports:

- Hillingdon's Housing Strategy 2012-15
- Tenancy Strategy
- Tenancy Policy
- Review of the Housing Allocation Policy

It was noted that the covering report provided an overview of the four key housing documents which were appended to it.

Officers explained that as soon as the drafts had been agreed by Cabinet, a full consultation exercise would be undertaken which would include online questionnaires and consultation meetings (as well as comments from the Committee) over a period of 8 weeks. At the end of this period, the outcome of the consultation would be reported back to Cabinet, along with the four documents (listed above) for formal approval.

During the course of discussions, the Committee raised a number of points.

The Committee enquired how flexible tenancies would operate and how these would free housing stock. Officers explained that this policy would enable registered providers to use housing stock to its best advantage and enable the tenancy to take account of changes in people's lives within a reasonable timeframe. Flexible tenancies would also enable tenants to be matched to suitable properties more effectively. It was noted that no Local Authority had come to the end of a 5 year assessment period as it was a relatively new policy.

The Labour Group Members of the Committee explained that they disagreed with a number of policies contained within the four key housing documents. These included, the Council discharging its housing duty to the Private Rented Sector, the procurement of housing outside Hillingdon and the suggestion that 80% of market rents were affordable. Further comments received from Labour Members included their discomfort at the removal of lifetime tenancies, they suggested the fixed term tenancy, if adopted, should be extended from 5 years to 10 years and the suggestion that carers could be mentioned as an exemption from this policy.

In relation to discharging its duty to the Private Rented Sector (PRS), officers explained that the Council had a duty to ensure all properties were used to their best advantage. Officers acknowledged that the PRS had grown significantly in the last 5 years and discharging into the PRS would be attractive to a significant number of people as this would enable residents to live closer to their preferred location.

Officers confirmed that the Councils' policy had always been local housing for local people but that in certain cases, some out of borough properties were sourced from Slough, Harrow and Ealing. In considering out of borough placements, officers confirmed that the vulnerability of the tenant and the affordability of the placement were key considerations before any decision was made.

The Committee were informed that Government had introduced the affordable rent model. Officers confirmed that 65% of market rent were generally affordable in Hillingdon and the Committee asked for this point to be highlighted in the final version of the report to Cabinet.

With respect to the removal of lifetime tenancies, the Committee heard that this policy was not a mechanism to address tenant behaviour issues such as anti-social behaviour or non-payment of rent but rather about maximising the use of properties throughout the borough. Members agreed that carers and users should be recognised on an equal footing and it was suggested that a closely monitored list of private landlords should be created to provide assurance to tenants in the PRS.

In relation to what the Council was doing to address overcrowding and the increased demand for larger properties, officers confirmed that evidence was taken from a combination of sources including the Housing Market Assessment and market surveys. After this information had been collated, it was then used to inform planning policies. Officers also explained that there was ongoing work looking at the under occupation of properties by older people to see how those properties could be better used.

The Committee asked officers what steps were being taken to tackle and prevent homelessness. Members heard that the most cost effective way to combat this was through the preventative agenda and encouraging tenants not to move unnecessarily.

Members explained that they were aware about 20 people had been through the Council's Winter Night Shelter Programme and asked officers to comment on how successful the scheme had been. In response, officers explained that at least 50% of those involved in the scheme had chosen to become rough sleepers again and in many cases it was a question of the homeless person finding it difficult to adapt to a new living environment. Officers confirmed that they were actively looking at how this success rate could be improved in the future.

The Tenancy Succession Policy was also raised in discussion and concern was expressed about instances where children had been caring for elderly parents as part of the household and then been asked to vacate the property when the parent/s had died. Officers confirmed that tenants were entitled to one succession in law and sometimes issues occurred when a succession had already occurred between parents and an incorrect assumption was made that the property would automatically be transferred to the son or daughter. The Committee were encouraged to learn that officers were aware of this specific issue and officers were investigating ways of improving joint working between Housing and Housing Options teams to ensure processes were improved in the future.

The Committee also enquired about hostel accommodation in the borough for single people. Officers reported that the Council had conducted a hostel redevelopment programme about three years ago when approximately 5 new hostels were provided for the most vulnerable clients. At present, officers were looking at a variety of options to provide temporary

accommodation for homeless people, one of which was hostel provisions as this was acknowledged to be more cost effective in the long term than relying on bed and breakfast options.

In discussing affordable homes, the Committee noted that Hillingdon's most recent Housing Market Assessment had identified a need for a net additional 2,624 homes over the next 5 years. However, elsewhere in the report, this need was expressed as being a minimum provision of 5,475 until 2026. To improve the clarity of the report, the Committee suggested that a consistent statistic was used in the final version of the report.

In relation to the Housing Allocation Policy, Members asked for further clarification as to whether this would be decided by local criteria or local need. Officers explained that in all cases, the most vulnerable would be housed first but that the Localism Act would cater for some allocations to be made according to local needs. Officers confirmed the term Housing Need would need to be clarified in the final version of the report to Cabinet.

With regards to the current requirement that 10 years living continuously in the same location amounted to local residency, Members asked how this might be applied to asylum seekers. In response, officers confirmed that the Localism Act included a residency clause and that after all the feedback on all four core documents had been received, there would be a requirement for the Council to conduct an equalities impact assessment to ensure the policies had been developed in an equitable way.

The final area highlighted by Committee was in relation to vulnerable groups and their housing and support needs. The Committee noted that Hillingdon has a significantly larger proportion of people in younger age groups (5-19) compared to England and London, and Office of National Statistics data had estimated that this might amount to as much as 25% of the population of the borough. With these figures in mind, the Committee agreed that it was essential that for those 16 to 17 years olds who had become homeless, which the Council had a duty to home, that effective advice and support was in place to assist with this transition.

The Committee also reviewed the Forward Plan from February to May 2013 and requested officers to provide briefing notes on the following items:

- 836 – Outcome of further consultation on learning disabilities day services
- 897 – Joint Adult Mental Health Commissioning Plan 2013-15
- 894 –Hillingdon's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-15.

Resolved –

- 1. That the 4 core reports be noted**
- 2. That officers be asked to note the feedback received from the Committee and to integrate this into the ongoing consultation process.**
- 3. That officers be requested to provide briefing notes on the following Forward Plan items: 836, 897 and 894 as detailed above.**

BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR: SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND HOUSING SERVICES 2013/14 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Head of Finance, Social Care and Health introduced the report.

The report set out the draft revenue budget and capital programme of Social Services, Health and Housing (SS,H&H) for 2013/14, along with indicative projections for the medium term. Members were informed that the Council was looking to make significant savings of around £12.8m, on top of the £17.7m delivered in 2012/13. It was noted that the final funding settlement for 2013/14 had only just been announced, but not yet fully analysed and so the budget was drafted on the latest estimated position.

It was noted that since the last budget report, the Housing Service with the exception of Housing Benefits had been transferred to the Finance Directorate and the remaining housing services, except for housing support services, had been moved into Residents Services.

Members heard that officers were working with Primary Care Trust colleagues to establish and confirm the value of the contracts that would be novated and the staffing establishment that will be transferred from the PCT to the Authority.

In terms of future challenges, the following areas were noted:

- The transfer of children from education to adult services was an ongoing service pressure.
- The impact of Housing Benefits changes on Temporary Accommodation
- The significant demographic pressure of an ageing population
- The transition of Public Health services to local government

The report recommended that discretionary charges for Social Care and Housing Services were not increased and remained at current levels. The exception being tenant rent which is proposed to increase by 3.1% in line with Government formula.

Points raised by Members were:

- Care and Support Bill – The Committee were pleased to learn that for the first time, this brought carers into the heart of the law and put them on a par with those for whom they cared.
- The ability of the budget to deliver front line services – Officers explained that current strategies had enabled officers to meet residents' needs. Compared to other Local Authorities, officers in Hillingdon had greater scope to redesign services to address service pressures.
- Increase in Transitional Children due to Demographic Changes – The Committee noted that since 2011/12 the additional costs had averaged approximately £1.2 per annum.
- Out of Borough Packages will be reviewed and part of that review will consider whether or not to relocate them back to Hillingdon – Officers explained that cases were reviewed on a cases by case basis.

- The Public Health Transfer from the PCT to the Authority – Officers reported that there had been a considerable number of representations made by the Council and that the final allocations represented a good settlement for the Borough.
- Financial Modeling – Officers confirmed that the review of financial models by LG Futures had confirmed that although current models were reliable and robust but being 6 years old were increasingly difficult to respond quickly in a changing environment. The Committee heard that new, more interactive models were being developed for both Adult’s and Children’s Services and when these were completed a complete refresh of the social care demographic pressures would be undertaken.

The Chairman thanked officers for a clear, well laid out report and for answering Member’s questions. The following comments were made to Cabinet:

The Committee’s comments on the Budget were agreed as follows:

“...“We note the various budget proposals and welcome the work of the Council in this demanding and complex area. We acknowledge the range of charges, costs and other emolument features. We congratulate officers on their market development work, in keeping costs down while monitoring quality and in particular, efforts with regard to residential placements particularly those out of borough. Additionally, we note the successful redesign of services to help people live more independently in the community.

We also note and welcome the work being conducted by the Council to support people to live independently in their own homes”.

Resolved:

- 1. That the budget projections contained in the report be noted and the comments made by the Committee be submitted to Cabinet.**

	<p>REVIEWS IN 2012/13 – DRAFT REPORT – REVIEW OF ADULT COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - (AGENDA ITEM 7)</p> <p>The Deputy Director Social Care and Health introduced the draft report which had been prepared in consultation with CNWL.</p> <p>The draft report was agreed subject to several minor typographical amendments and the inclusion of 2 new recommendations in relation to outreach work and staff education. The final wording of report to be agreed by the Chairman in consultation with the Labour Lead outside the meeting prior to submission to Cabinet.</p> <p>The Committee requested that its recommendations be fed into the Mental Health Strategy currently being developed by officers and that officers provide an update report on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations (subject to Cabinet approval) in one year's time</p> <p>Resolved –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the report be agreed subject to the amendments listed above with the final wording to be agreed between the Chairman and Labour Lead outside the meeting 2. That subject to Cabinet's approval, that the Committee's recommendations be fed into the Mental Health Strategy 3. That subject to Cabinet approval, that Officers be requested to provided an update report in one year's time on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations
38.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)</p> <p>Reference was made to the work programme and timetable of meetings.</p> <p>Resolved –</p> <p>That the report be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 6pm, closed at 8:10pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Charles Francis on 01895 556454. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.