

## **TOPICS FOR THE FIRST MAJOR REVIEW OF THE 2013/14 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

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### **REASON FOR ITEM**

At the meeting of 29 May 2013 Members asked that officers investigate a number of possible topics for the first major review of the municipal year. Following this meeting, officers from Democratic Services and Residents Services met to discuss the viability of these topics to provide updates and recommendations on how to progress. Updates on each suggested area are set out below.

Despite extensive exploration of all of the suggested topics, none of the areas were seen to be appropriate for a major review at this stage. Consequently, further guidance from the Committee is being sought to determine the topic of the first major review.

### **OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE**

1. To note the update provided below and seek clarification from officers where required.
2. To consider possible topics for the first major review of the 2013/14 Municipal Year.

### **INFORMATION**

#### **Background**

At the first RESPOC meeting of 2013/14 Members asked that officers investigate the following areas as possible topics for their first major review of the municipal year:

1. Street cleaning and the inclusion of footpaths and bridleways within cleaning programmes;
2. Environmental Health issues in the south of the Borough with a focus on air and noise quality near Heathrow airport;
3. The raising of water levels in the Borough and any challenges caused by this;
4. The heritage and history of the Borough with a focus on what is historically important and of value to residents; and
5. Building Regulations and what the Council does to ensure that they are enforced across the Borough.

#### **Alleyway / Bridleway cleaning**

Officers advised that there were no strategic issues with the cleaning of bridleways that would warrant a major review. As noted at the meeting itself, officers acknowledge that there may be some localised problems with such littering but it was confirmed that the problem was not Borough-wide.

However, it was suggested that the Council's response to some of these localised problems might be a suitable topic to investigate in a single meeting review later in the year. Should Members decide to undertake such a review, a scoping report can be produced for a later meeting.

### **Environmental Health in the Heathrow Area**

Officers advised that the issues of air and noise quality in and around Heathrow Airport were being adequately dealt with by existing monitoring processes. There are currently a range of international, European and national standards for air quality and the Council's Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) work closely with Heathrow airport staff to monitor the situation to ensure that the airport is compliant with these standards and that air quality is improving in the area. Officers will be able to provide a briefing paper on noise and air pollution in the Heathrow area for consideration at a later meeting should Members require further information.

The Chairman, in consultation with colleagues, has determined that the review into low-level environmental issues is not an appropriate topic at this juncture.

### **Water levels**

Officers advised that the areas of river, tidal and coastal flooding were the responsibility of the Environment Agency and not the Local Authority. A review into these areas was, therefore, considered to be difficult to influence in a major way.

It should be noted that the Council does have responsibility for the management of other sources of flooding such as surface water, groundwater and flooding from ordinary watercourses. This means that it undertakes the following:

- Recording information from flood events
- Registering assets (e.g. a pumping station) that have been identified as having a role to play in flood management
- Flood risk mapping and information gathering
- Emergency planning
- Sustainable urban drainage

Although it appears that this is a broad area that might profit from a review, officers advised that a significant amount of work has recently been undertaken by the Council on flooding. Work was undertaken in the light of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and led to the Council producing the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Surface Water Management Plan. Further planning and mapping documents are in the process of being developed to deal with flooding and officers noted that there would be little that the Committee could contribute to this ongoing work through a review.

### **Heritage and History of the Borough**

Officers noted that the Borough's heritage was a Hillingdon Improvement Project (HIP) Worksteam that focused on heritage / civic pride projects, building a historic legacy and promoting Local Arts and Culture. Officers emphasised that the Council is already actively working in this area and, moreover, has a successful track record in promoting the Borough's

heritage and celebrating its successes. Consequently, it was felt that there was no scope for a review in this area that did not duplicate work already being undertaken elsewhere in the Council.

It should also be noted that the Committee undertook a review into Heritage in Hillingdon in 2008 which focused on “how those living in the Borough can enjoy heritage and how the history of Hillingdon can be promoted.” Undertaking a similar review could be a further duplication of work already undertaken.

### **Borough-wide Building Regulations**

Officers noted that there were no significant issues with Building Regulations in the Borough that would warrant a major review. The following reasons were provided:

- The Committee had undertaken a major review in 2009/10 into Planning Enforcement and the issue of ‘homes’ in back gardens. Although this review did not focus broadly on building regulations, it was felt that there may be significant overlap if this review was undertaken.
- Officers also advised that many of the issues relating to building regulations and enforcement issues were extremely complex and detailed. It was felt that these issues may be difficult to explore strategically at Committee level. However, a briefing paper could be prepared for a future meeting.

### **SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY**

1. Members are asked to suggest review topics for the first major review of the year.