

## Minutes

Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy

Overview Committee

Wednesday 29 October 2014

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



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

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|     | <p><b>Members Present:</b><br/>Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman), Lynne Allen, Wayne Bridges, Tony Burles, Nick Denys, Carol Melvin, Jane Palmer and Robin Sansarpuri.</p> <p><b>Apologies:</b><br/>Councillors Narinder Garg (Councillor Lynne Allen substituting) and Ray Graham (Councillor Jane Palmer substituting).</p> <p><b>Officers:</b><br/>Ian Anderson (Complaints and Service Improvement Manager - Administration), Michelle Gleeson (Customer Liaison Manager - Residents Services), Dan Kennedy (Head of Performance and Improvement) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p> <p><b>Witness:</b><br/>Richard Shaw (Investigator from Local Government Ombudsman Office).</p> |
| 20. | <p><b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2014</b></p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>  |
| 21. | <p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business would be considered in public.</p>   |
| 22. | <p><b>MAJOR REVIEW - THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE</b></p> <p>For this meeting, the Committee was provided with evidence from Richard Shaw, an Investigator for the Local Government Ombudsman Office.</p> <p>The Committee was provided with a summary of the key components of a good complaints procedure:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To enable residents to make officers and the Council accountable</li><li>• Where complaints have been justified, to enable Councils to address poor working practice and to improve services</li><li>• To have a clear and transparent process which enables a quick resolution to residents' complaints</li></ul> <p><b>Action By:</b></p>                      |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing quickly with a complaint for the benefit of a complainant</li> <li>• The less stages of a complaints process would eliminate repetitiveness and bring about a quicker resolution</li> <li>• Service requests and appeals should be dealt with separately and outside the complaints process</li> <li>• The focus should be on resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity</li> <li>• There should be consideration given to the costs of dealing with complaints</li> <li>• The key focus should be on customer care and customer satisfaction for residents</li> <li>• A complaints process needs to be understood and publicised and accessible for residents</li> <li>• There should be a common procedure to cover contractors</li> <li>• Managers should be made responsible for dealing with complaints and should be empowered to proactively resolve complaints</li> <li>• Managers should be given discretionary powers to remedy failures and to make apologies to complainants where necessary</li> <li>• Officers should be given discretionary powers to offer compensation to remedy a failure</li> <li>• Failures which have been highlighted by a complaint provided an opportunity to make improvements to services</li> <li>• Regarding Council policy - caveats should be contained in complaints procedures which clearly stated that a complaint about Council policy which had been correctly applied should not be taken through the complaints procedure. Complaints could be advised to submit their complaint direct to the Local Government Ombudsman</li> <li>• Directors should have sight and knowledge of complaints</li> </ul> <p>Discussion took place on aspects of the evidence provided and reference was made to the various complaints which the Council received in relation to the Housing Allocation Policy and Housing Benefit and Council Tax decisions. Members were informed that complaints should still be considered regarding the application of policies, but not the actual policy itself. The importance was stressed of officers ensuring they correctly applied policies.</p> | <p><b>Action By:</b></p> |
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| <p><b>23.</b></p>    | <p><b>MEMBERS ENQUIRIES</b></p> <p>The Committee was provided with a report which provided details on the Members Enquiries process, together with statistics of Members Enquiries received across the Council's service areas for 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.</p> <p>The Customer Liaison Manager for Residents Services attended the meeting and gave an overview of the process. A Member Enquiry (ME) was a question which a Councillor wanted answered on behalf of residents or other local organisations.</p> <p>The Members Liaison Officers within both Residents Services and Administration and Finance, dealt with such queries and provided an efficient link for this, ensuring all Members' Enquiries were logged, processed and progressed with Lead Officers to guarantee a response within a dedicated timescale of 10 working days.</p> <p>Members agreed that the service provided was a very useful resource and enabled Members to provide guidance and advice to their constituents.</p> <p>The success of the service was highlighted by the increased usage over the last two years:-</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="327 1191 1228 1715"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Service Areas</b></th> <th><b>2012/13</b></th> <th><b>2013/14</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Housing Service</td> <td>862</td> <td>1,134</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing Benefit</td> <td>79</td> <td>105</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Council Tax</td> <td>55</td> <td>88</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education Services</td> <td>44</td> <td>39</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residents Services</td> <td>4,591</td> <td>5,444</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>5,631</b></td> <td><b>6,810</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Discussion took place on the process and Members expressed their appreciation at the efforts of the Member Liaison Officers. Officers were asked that, where possible, Members Enquiries responses sent to Members, be also copied to the resident concerned.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b></p> | <b>Service Areas</b> | <b>2012/13</b> | <b>2013/14</b> | Housing Service | 862 | 1,134 | Housing Benefit | 79 | 105 | Council Tax | 55 | 88 | Education Services | 44 | 39 | Residents Services | 4,591 | 5,444 | <b>Total</b> | <b>5,631</b> | <b>6,810</b> | <p><b>Action By:</b></p> |
|----------------------|---|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----|-------|-----------------|----|-----|-------------|----|----|--------------------|----|----|--------------------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Service Areas</b> | <b>2012/13</b>  | <b>2013/14</b>       |                |                |                 |     |       |                 |    |     |             |    |    |                    |    |    |                    |       |       |              |              |              |                          |
| Housing Service      | 862   | 1,134                |                |                |                 |     |       |                 |    |     |             |    |    |                    |    |    |                    |       |       |              |              |              |                          |
| Housing Benefit      | 79  | 105                  |                |                |                 |     |       |                 |    |     |             |    |    |                    |    |    |                    |       |       |              |              |              |                          |
| Council Tax          | 55  | 88                   |                |                |                 |     |       |                 |    |     |             |    |    |                    |    |    |                    |       |       |              |              |              |                          |
| Education Services   | 44  | 39                   |                |                |                 |     |       |                 |    |     |             |    |    |                    |    |    |                    |       |       |              |              |              |                          |
| Residents Services   | 4,591   | 5,444                |                |                |                 |     |       |                 |    |     |             |    |    |                    |    |    |                    |       |       |              |              |              |                          |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>5,631</b>  | <b>6,810</b>         |                |                |                 |     |       |                 |    |     |             |    |    |                    |    |    |                    |       |       |              |              |              |                          |

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|            | <b>1. That the report and the presentation given be noted and officers be thanked for the excellent service given to Members on behalf of residents.</b> |  |
| <b>24.</b> | <b>WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15</b><br><br>Noted. Members asked that the scheduled next meeting of the Committee be re-arranged.                               |  |
| <b>25.</b> | <b>CABINET FORWARD PLAN</b><br><br>Noted.  |  |
|            | <b>Meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.30pm</b><br><b>Next meeting: 11 December 2014 at 7.30pm</b>   |  |

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. These minutes are circulated to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.