

RESIDENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: *HOARDING IN HILLINGDON*

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Philip Corthorne (lead) Councillor Keith Burrows Councillor David Simmonds CBE
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Social Services, Health and Housing Planning, Transportation and Recycling Education and Children's Services
Officer Contact(s)	Mark Braddock, Administration Directorate
Papers with report	Appendix A - Policy Overview Committee review - final report

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	To receive the Committee's review into Hoarding in Hillingdon. The Committee's report provides a useful insight into both the physiological and physical effects of hoarding, along with proposals to improve support to vulnerable hoarders, their family and the nearby environment affected. Cabinet is requested to consider the Committee's findings.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People; Our Built Environment</i> .
Financial Cost	Within existing service budgets.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Residents' and Environmental Services
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 1. Welcomes the report from the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee on their review into hoarding.**
- 2. Agrees the recommendations of the review, along with their implementation, as set out below:**

- a) That the Council's Performance Team liaises with the Vulnerable Persons Panel to assist in improving the recording of data in relation to hoarding problems and incidences in order to improve the Council's intelligence on them.
- b) To ensure consistency of approach, that officers develop a hoarding protocol by May 2016 (as an operational document for use by the Vulnerable Persons Panel) with sign-off by Hillingdon's Corporate Management Team, relevant Cabinet Member and other partner agency boards, such as the London Fire Brigade.
- c) To note the multi-agency approach in respect of funding to support hoarding cases and on the Council's part, requests that the Leader of the Council gives consideration to whether the Leader's Initiative for Older People could play a role in supporting Older People who hoard.
- d) That the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health & Housing request officers to review whether the Vulnerable Persons Panel can be better integrated into established safeguarding arrangements, where children are potentially at risk by hoarding.
- e) That the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing considers with officers whether there is scope for providing more integrated support for those who are vulnerable and with people with mental health problems who hoard.
- f) That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation & Recycling and relevant officers consider what further measures can be undertaken by officers to tackle hoarding when the use of planning enforcement is a potential course of action.

Reasons for recommendation

To consider the report of the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee and propose ways in which the Council and partners can support hoarders and tackle hoarding.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations, or pursue alternative routes in which to progress the objectives of the review.

Background to the review

The Committee identified the topic of hoarding because there had been no comprehensive review of the matter by Elected Members in recent times. Additionally, the subject had been put back into the national spotlight recently through related television documentaries and more significantly, recognition by the medical profession of a "Hoarding Disorder".

The Committee structured its review to understand why people hoard, the types of hoarding and their prevalence. Members considered both officer and expert witness testimony to review the powers available to tackle the physical effects of hoarding, the social and health care options available when individuals are diagnosed with Hoarding Disorder, along with the consequential effects on family, home and local environment.

It was noted that in Hillingdon there had been 36 recognised cases considered by the Council and partners over the last 18 months, though it was acknowledged that this figure significantly under-represented the problem. In Hillingdon, the conduit for any hoarding cases presented is via the Vulnerable Persons Panel, chaired by the London Fire Brigade.

The Committee welcomed the partnership approach in place in Hillingdon, which is lacking in many other local authorities. However, Members considered there was some room for improvement in a number of areas, particularly around process, and has put forward six practical recommendations to Cabinet aimed at improving the effectiveness of the multi-agency response.

Cabinet Members' response

Cabinet Members have considered the six recommendations of the review and support their implementation on the basis set out below.

Recommendation	Response
(a) That the Council's Performance Team liaises with the Vulnerable Persons Panel to assist in improving the recording of data in relation to hoarding problems and incidences in order to improve the Council's intelligence on them.	<p>Support - Like with other areas of Council activity, the importance of ensuring accurate data collection and sharing of information is critical to good service delivery and service improvement.</p> <p>Noting there is currently a lack of data monitoring in this area, assistance to the Panel on its information and intelligence requirements is welcomed.</p>
(b) To ensure consistency of approach, that officers develop a hoarding protocol by May 2016 (as an operational document for use by the Vulnerable Persons Panel) with sign-off by Hillingdon's Corporate Management Team, relevant Cabinet Member and other partner agency boards, such as the London Fire Brigade.	<p>Support - The development of a multi-agency protocol would provide a consistent level of service, clear guidelines for officers and the Vulnerable Persons Panel, along with helpful practitioner guides for the Council and partner organisations.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health & Housing looks forward to seeing the protocol before adoption.</p>
(c) To note the multi-agency approach in respect of funding to support hoarding cases and on the Council's part, requests that the Leader of the Council gives consideration to whether the Leader's Initiative for Older	<p>Support - The review indicates that Older People are particularly affected by hoarding for a variety of reasons along with the fact that hoarding in general is significantly unreported.</p>

<p>People could play a role in supporting Older People who hoard.</p>	<p>The usefulness of other ‘front-door’ services to Older People, e.g. Gas checks, to identify serious hoarding issues is worth exploring further. Discussion with the Leader of the Council and relevant officers will take place to see how best hoarding can be integrated into the Older People’s Plan and work by the Leader’s Initiative for Older People.</p> <p>Whilst not recommend by the Committee, witnesses to the review indicated support for a central multi-agency budget to support hoarding. This may be difficult to implement and will require further consideration by finance. There are currently no individual dedicated budgets in service areas in relation to hoarding.</p>
<p>(d) That the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health & Housing request officers to review whether the Vulnerable Persons Panel can be better integrated into established safeguarding arrangements, where children are potentially at risk by hoarding.</p>	<p>Support - Noting that there are no current arrangements in place for such reporting, this recommendation is welcome.</p> <p>Officers will be asked to consider the most suitable arrangements to integrate the work of the Vulnerable Persons Panel into established safeguarding procedures and are requested to raised this with the Independent Chairman of the two safeguarding boards.</p>
<p>(e) That the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing considers with officers whether there is scope for providing more integrated support for those who are vulnerable and with people with mental health problems who hoard.</p>	<p>Support - The Cabinet Member will ask that as part of officers’ ongoing review existing service provision and commissioning arrangements, whether there are opportunities to incorporate support for hoarding disorder.</p>
<p>(f) That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transportation & Recycling and relevant officers consider what further measures can be undertaken by officers to tackle hoarding when the use of planning enforcement is a potential course of action.</p>	<p>Support - The Cabinet Member will ask the Head of Planning and Enforcement to investigate this further - along with any links required to the work of the Vulnerable Person’s Panel and report back to him.</p>

Financial Implications

As the report recognises, the costs to the Council and partners of dealing with hoarding are unknown and any plans to create a central budget may be problematic given that there are generally no dedicated budgets for this within services. It is noted that sometimes costs can be recovered from the resident who hoarded or from their family, but that this is not always the

case. It was noted that some use had been made of Community Payback Teams and Blue Sky Regeneration in clearing properties.

The recommendations from the Committee as they stand do not create any additional budgetary pressures and primarily seek to get the necessary policies, processes and procedures in place to make the multi-agency approach more effective. However, any subsequent decisions by Members to increase the level of support those who hoard or clean up properties may require further financial consideration, but these are not a matter for this report at this time.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

These recommendations, if approved by Cabinet, will improve the response options and service provided to people who have Hoarding Disorder along with a more co-ordinated approach to tackle hoarding where it impacts upon the wider community.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee sought a range of expert witness testimony as set out in Appendix C of their report.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications outlined above, noting that there are a range of potential funding sources - including the Older People's Initiative - within existing approved budgets to support action to tackle hoarding. Given the availability of resources which could be applied flexibly to fund any action to tackle hoarding, creation of a dedicated central budget would not be necessary and may result in an increased administrative burden.

Legal

The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL