

Minutes

SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

27 February 2018



Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p>MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Jane Palmer (Vice-Chairman) Teji Barnes Peter Davis Becky Haggart Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana Tony Eginton Peter Money June Nelson Mary O'Connor</p>
	<p>OFFICERS PRESENT: John Wheatley - Senior Policy Officer Debby Weller - Policy & Strategy Manager, Housing Neil Fraser - Democratic Services Officer</p>
54.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Dan Kennedy and Steve Hajioff.</p>
55.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Eginton declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 5, in that his son was a reserve officer in the RAF.</p> <p>Councillor Nelson declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 5, in that her nephew was a member of the armed forces.</p>
56.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2018 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2018 be approved as a correct record.</p>
57.	<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>It was confirmed that there were no Part II items, and that all business would therefore be conducted in public.</p>

58. **COUNCIL SUPPORT TO HILLINGDON ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT** (*Agenda Item 5*)

John Wheatley, Senior Policy Officer, introduced a report detailing the Council's support to Hillingdon's Armed Forces Community Covenant.

The Committee was informed that there was limited information regarding the number of active and ex-service men and women living within the Borough. The national census did not include questions relating to prior service in the Armed Forces, and while there was a reasonable understanding of the numbers employed at RAF Northolt, additional population figures were extrapolations from research conducted by groups such as the Royal British Legion and the Forces in Mind Trust.

To enable better information gathering, the Royal British Legion had cited a number of Councils that had introduced additional questioning at their main receptions and customer contact centres, as well as within their equalities monitoring forms.

Research conducted had shown that ex-service men and women were more likely to experience problems with mental and physical health, and those of working age were less likely to be employed than the general population. In recognition of those difficulties, Hillingdon Council had introduced an exception to the usual 10 year residency requirement and had provided additional priority within the Social Housing Allocation Policy.

In addition, the national School's Admission Code now included provision for allocating a school place in advance of a child moving to an area, when supporting information had been provided to evidence that a move was to take place. The Council had also set up a dedicated web page on admissions for forces families to draw attention to the 2012 Schools Admission Code, to ensure that children of UK service personnel were not disadvantaged when applying for schools as a result of being posted at various locations.

Hillingdon had a strong record of supporting the armed forces with events and services. Councillor Douglas Mills, Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration, was appointed as its Armed Forces Champion, supported by a senior level Partnership Board and backed by an officer who acted as the contact point for the Community Covenant.

Strong links remained with RAF Northolt, seen through Council-supported Public Open Days at the Base, which were useful when building links with schools and community groups. As part of their Centenary celebrations, RAF Northolt personnel had paraded through Uxbridge to exercise their Freedom of the Borough. A Homecoming Parade organised for 63 Squadron upon their return from an Afghanistan deployment was attended by in excess of 20,000 people.

The Council arranged annual fishing days for armed forces personnel returning from operational deployments, and all who live at the RAF Northolt base were issued with a Hillingdon First card which provided a range of discounts at Borough leisure facilities and car parks.

Additionally, links were maintained with the RAF Music Services, as Northolt

is home to the Central Band of the RAF. As a key partner with the Hillingdon Music Service, the Central Band had performed concerts and workshops for music students and visited many schools to promote music within the Borough. The partnership included the use of the Winston Churchill Hall in Ruislip free of charge for RAF charity concerts.

The Council had invested £6m to build a new Education and Visitor Centre at the historic Battle of Britain Bunker on the former RAF Uxbridge site, and Hillingdon had its Silver Award under Government's Employer Recognition Scheme renewed in December 2017, as recognition of the excellent support given to Hillingdon Reservists.

Veteran Groups and charities were supported through trips to Normandy beaches and all Normandy Veterans were awarded the Civic Medal of the Borough in recognition of their wartime contributions. The Council had also assisted several Veterans with applications to be awarded the Legion D'Honneur by the French Government, and had provided the local Ghurkha community, many of whom have served with the British armed forces, with dedicated spaces at one of the Borough's cemeteries.

Members thanked Mr Wheatley for his report, and sought further information on a number of points:

Did officers know the number of ex-service men and women now homeless or sleeping rough within the Borough?

It was confirmed that the most recent CHAIN data from the London Database, from 2016/17, showed that Hillingdon had 10 ex service personnel who were sleeping rough, which equated to 5.6% of Hillingdon's total rough sleepers. This compared to approximately 7% across London as a whole.

Members confirmed that the Secretary of State had recently pledged to increase funding for Armed Forces mental health services over the next decade, and had launched a new Military Mental Health Helpline. Would this helpline be promoted within Hillingdon? It was agreed that the clerk would forward details of this announcement to Mr Wheatley, for review.

Members suggested that, as the Council was consulted before each census, a request could be made to include additional questions relating to the armed forces. It was agreed that the clerk would review how best to approach this, before feeding back to the Committee.

Members sought clarity over whether Hillingdon's Social Housing Allocation Policy made provision for reserve officers. In addition, it was highlighted that the Council's website did not clearly refer to the Social Housing Allocation Policy provisions for ex-service personnel, nor made reference to the armed forces within the application for social housing. It was also confirmed that Councillor Mills was not clearly listed as Hillingdon's Armed Forces Champion on the website.

It was agreed that officers would review the housing application form and the website accordingly.

The Committee requested that membership of the Community Covenant

Partnership Board be confirmed to all Members by email.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the clerk forward details of Secretary of State's pledge to support armed forces mental health services to Mr Wheatley;
3. That the clerk confirm the process by which the Council could request that questions relating to the armed forces be included in the next national census;
4. That Hillingdon's housing policy be reviewed to determine whether it included provision for reserve officers, that Hillingdon's housing application form and the Council's website be reviewed as above; and
5. That membership of the Community Covenant Partnership Board be confirmed to all Members by email.

59. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 6*)

The clerk tabled an updated forward plan document that contained new items to be considered at forthcoming Cabinet meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

60. **WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18** (*Agenda Item 7*)

The clerk updated the Committee on changes to the published work programme for 2017/18.

The Committee was advised that, due to pre-existing time commitments, there was insufficient time for the suggested informational item on mental health within Hillingdon to be heard at the Committee meeting in March 2018. It was suggested that the topic of mental health in Hillingdon be retained for consideration as a potential review within the next municipal year.

Similarly, the update to the Stroke Prevention review, previously scheduled for the Committee's meeting in March 2018, would be moved to a provisional item within the work programme for 2018/19.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme 2017/18 be noted.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.28 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Neil Fraser - Democratic Services Officer on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

