

## Minutes

### RESIDENTS, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

22 January 2019



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

	<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b> Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman), Michael Markham (Vice-Chairman), Allan Kauffman, Heena Makwana, Stuart Mathers, Paula Rodrigues, Jan Sweeting and Steve Tuckwell</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Andy Evans (Senior Service Manager Residents Services), Peter Malewicz (Group Finance Manager), Jim Marsh (Transformation Manager), Dan Kennedy (Director of Housing, Environment, Education, Performance, Health &amp; Wellbeing), Laurie Baker (Interim Head of School Improvement/Education Quality &amp; Strategy), and Neil Fraser (Democratic Services Officer)</p> <p>Also Present: Rachel Mason (CAPITA Account Manager) and Andy Davies (CAPITA Product Director)</p>
45.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Hurhangee.</p>
46.	<p><b>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
47.	<p><b>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items were marked as Part I, and would therefore be considered in public.</p>
48.	<p><b>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Cllr Sweeting advised that the information on fly tipping, forwarded to the Committee following the previous meeting, had not included all instances of fly tipping within the Borough. It was requested that a full audit be brought as part of a future report to the Committee.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2018 be approved as a correct record.</p>

49. **WITNESS SESSION FOR REVIEW INTO PAYMENT MODERNISATION** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Jim Marsh – Transformation Manager, Rachel Mason – Capita Account Manager, and Andy Davies – Capita Product Director, provided the Committee with information to support the review into Payment Modernisation across Key Resident Services. Key points highlighted included:

The Council's website was due for a refresh, to better enable residents to easily make payments in confidence. The refreshed website would be designed to reduce the number of 'clicks' required to make a payment, and would include payment guidance and confirmation of a successful transaction. The new website's payment options would be designed to mitigate residents' current issues with online payments, which included a lack of signposting towards payments upon logging onto the site, uncertainty over whether their payment had been successful, as well as a lack of confidence in using microsites or third party sites which did not display Hillingdon branding.

Currently, contact from Hillingdon residents to the Council was approximately 70% via the telephone. Email, website and face-to-face contact accounted for the remaining 30%. The aim was to have these figures reversed, with 70% of contact via the website moving forward. It was understood that a subset of Hillingdon residents were either unwilling or unable to use online tools, and so telephone contact options would remain for those residents, alongside the ability to talk to an officer should an issue be complicated and unable to be addressed online.

Only 47% of the current webforms on the website had payment functionality. 15% of webforms provided an online payment option. 6.4% of current transactions resulted in a payment.

Market challenges to the adoption of technology for payments with local authorities included GDPR, PSD2, and Brexit. Whilst there were strong commercial benefits to increasing online payments, it was accepted that a cash option should remain. It was highlighted that the preference of residents would ultimately inform the payment solutions made available.

It had been noted that there was an increase in the use of tablets for the age 60+ demographic, often to the exclusion of desktop computer use. In comparison, ages 15-17 more often used their mobile telephone handsets to conduct online transactions. Direct Debits were the most cost-effective method of payment for Councils to process, though many residents were choosing to use credit cards, which provided rewards such as cashback, air miles etc.

Mature payment methods included card payments via the web, as well as direct debits. Open Banking was in its formative stages, whilst crypto currency was being discussed but was not likely to be a preference for residents.

In the public sector, telephone calls remained the preference of residents overall. However, automated solutions would provide efficiency and cost benefits, and alternatives included web chats, automatic payments, and continuous payments. Online payments reduced risk and overhead, such as postage and paper costs. Web chats had been seen to provide significant efficiencies, allowing a customer service representative to manage up to 7 customers at once through multiple chats, versus a single customer via phone or face to face.

For card payments, integrated solutions offered efficiency and flexibility, while bank

terminals were quick to deploy and had a low technical overhead. Payments via smartphone, such as via Apple Pay) were often limited to a maximum £30 transaction, though higher value transactions were now becoming more common.

A proposed MyAccount, with single sign-in, would allow residents to manage multiple payments, including those of relatives and dependants (following application of the appropriate security checks).

Future plans included:

- Re-designed templates, navigation, and new 'Home Page' for Smartphones
- Branding on all portals/microsites, with payment functionality
- Improved page layouts, e-form structure, and links
- A consistent style, plain language, and minimal use of PDF attachments
- 3 click navigation based on the highest volume customer journeys
- Integrated and consolidated microsites
- Develop a new MyAccount with more services, with a Single Sign On and (potentially) shopping trolley for payments
- A service access process re-design with integrated webforms for the high demand services (Housing, Waste, Adult Social Care)

The rollout of these changes was subject to approval from Cabinet.

The Committee asked a number of questions, including:

**Was it the aim that ultimately, all payments to the Council should be through the new website?**

The aim was to ensure that any resident who wanted to use the website, was able to do so quickly, easily and intuitively. Although ultimately, the Council was looking to reduce the amount of cash payments to be processed, payment options would be determined by resident behaviour. It was accepted that a subset of Hillingdon residents would be unable or unwilling to use online payment options, and so alternative payment options would remain available.

**What was the lowest value digital card payment that could be processed?**

Digital card processing charges were applied proportionately to the value of the transaction, so there was no minimum payment value that could be accepted.

**Future plans seemed challenging to successfully implement. Were there other local authorities that had carried out similar refreshes that Hillingdon could learn from?**

It was important to recognise that many of the options presented within the witness session were not subject to the procurement of new technology. In many cases, Hillingdon had existing technology that could be used. A number of London Boroughs were using the same technology as Hillingdon, had conducted similar exercises, and case studies were available for officers to learn from.

**How long would it take for the new payment options available via the website to begin showing a return on investment?**

It was expected that initial costs would total £280k in the first year, for a return of £800k. In the second year, expenditure costs would be in the region of £50-100k, with

third year expenditure being nil. Returns in the second and third year were expected to be approximately £2.4m.

Members highlighted the importance of including a 'log off' button. In addition, Members affirmed the need to provide sufficient payment options for all residents, including vulnerable residents and residents who were unable to read.

**RESOLVED:** That the information presented be noted.

50.	<b>INFORMATION REPORT FOR REVIEW INTO PAYMENT MODERNISATION: THE FUTURE OF PAYMENTS - USAGE TRENDS AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES</b> <i>(Agenda Item 6)</i>
51.	<b>2019/20 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF RESIDENTS, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE</b> <i>(Agenda Item 7)</i>
	<p>Andy Evans – Deputy Director of Corporate Finance, and Peter Malewicz – Finance Manager, introduced the 2019/20 Budget Proposals for services within the Committee's remit. The Committee was advised that:</p> <p>The Council continued to operate within the constraints of reduced funding from Government. In addition, continuing demographic and demand pressures necessitated a requirement for further savings, totalling £48,155k over the four years to 2022/23.</p> <p>For the financial year 2019/20, frontline services would be maintained through a £7,776k release from General Balances and a 2.4% increase in Council Tax. The increase in Council Tax was limited to 90% of the average 2018/19 increases for households in the neighbouring boroughs of Ealing, Harrow and Hounslow, and equated to £26.71 per annum for a Band D household.</p> <p>Proposed savings figures included an assumed increase in Government funding of £10,000k over the four year period, but there remained uncertainty due to Brexit and the in-progress Fair Funding Review. The funding strategy was offset by the aforementioned increase in Council Tax at 2.4% in 2019/20, and indicative inflationary uplifts of 2.99% on Council Tax from 2020/21 securing £13,766k additional income. In addition to this, identified savings would deliver a further £6,366k and planned use of General Balances left £27,973k of savings to be identified over the next three budget cycles.</p> <p>Recurrent funding available to support the budget requirement was projected to total £213,671k in 2019/20, inclusive of £2,684k additional income linked to the proposed 2.4% increase in Council Tax. This recurrent funding was supplemented by £15,466k of one-off funding, including £6,600k additional income from the London Business Rates Pilot Pool and a £7,776k release from General Balances, to support the £229,137k projected cost of delivering services in 2019/20.</p> <p>The draft budget included £862k new funding for Priority Growth items which, together with £20k of brought forward resources, would support £632k of specific initiatives and £250k of unallocated growth was available to meet emerging requirements. The Council's capital programme included £448,812k of planned investment in local infrastructure over the period 2018/19 to 2023/24. This included a new swimming pool in the Yiewsley / West Drayton area, a major programme of investment in the</p>

Borough's highways, and re-provision of the Hillingdon Outdoor Activity Centre in response to High Speed 2.

Overall, the Council's financial position remained strong.

Members asked a number of questions, including:

**The report listed savings proposals of £511k for Residents Services and £491k for Social Care, for 2019/20. Could officers provide a breakdown of what areas these savings figures would cover? Did one of these items include the proposed savings of £100k relating to security reductions, and could this be covered by ASBIT officers?**

The report included information specific to the services within the remit of REESPOC, with the overall figures including items that had been reported to the Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities and Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committees. Within the remit of REESPOC, the £491k for Social Care included proposed savings that had been identified within the provision of transport needs for vulnerable children, and was based on a review of route management, contractor fees, and a general streamlining of the service management.

Members felt that the figures within the report were difficult to reconcile alongside the figures previously presented to Cabinet. Officers agreed that they would provide additional information via the clerk, to help Members reconcile the two budget reports and to clarify the proposed savings that related to the Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee.

**Regarding SEN transport, it was noted that the projected funds required to meet the forecasted growth in demand exceeded the funds allocated. Why was this?**

The forecasted figure set out in the report was for SEN Transport across multiple years. The forecasted growth in demand was aligned to the potential growth in population and that population's needs. However, it was important to note that the needs of one child did not equate to a single transport route/journey. For example, multi-person vehicles could be used to offset costs.

**The report listed a reduction in expenditure projections for Secondary School Expansions. Why was this?**

The forecasted reduction was based on a changing population. In many London boroughs, populations had been seen to stabilise or even reduce, as families moved out of London. The figure had been reached following a re-profiling of need based on population, required spaces, and churn.

**Regarding Cross Cutting, which posts had been deleted?**

Deleted posts were predominantly within business administration and back-office areas. A vacant post exercise was undertaken across the Council with input and final sign-off from the relevant operational service areas, and was focused on long-term vacancies of six months or longer.

**Fees and Charges had seen a significant increase. Why were such large increases proposed?**

All charges had been benchmarked under the 90% of neighbouring boroughs fee principle threshold. In many areas, no increase had been applied for number of years, and fees had therefore fallen behind neighbouring authorities. In some services such as Music Services a policy decision had been taken to phase the increase to the 90% level over more than one year. Existing concessions were being maintained across these services.

**How were services monitored to ensure that they were not compromised as a result of reduced or changed funding?**

Officers were maintaining a close overview of services, which included regular reports alongside resident feedback. The need for strong management and quality front line staff was recognised as important for the effective delivery of services to residents.

Labour Group Members expressed serious concerns over the budget, with specific reference to the reductions outlined within the service transformation.

It was agreed that Councillor Sweeting would liaise with the Chairman and the clerk to request additional information on behalf of the Committee.

Members noted the contents of the report, and Councillor Tuckwell made the following comment:

*'That it was gratifying to see that, despite the financial pressures faced by the Council, the Capital Programme was able to provide adequate funds for projects to maintain and improve services for residents, such as school expansions, street lighting, and highways improvements. The Committee thanked officers for their input and efforts.'*

Following a proposal by the Chairman, the above comments were approved by the Committee as comments to be submitted on the budget. However, Labour Group Members asked that their concerns over the adoption of these comments, and their serious concerns over the proposed budget savings for services under the remit of REESPOC, be recorded in the minutes.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the Committee's agreed comments on the budget be included in the forthcoming report to the Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities Policy Overview Committee;
3. That officers provide additional information to help Members reconcile the information included within the report against the information previously presented to Cabinet,
4. That officers provide a breakdown of the proposed savings for Residents Services and Social Care; and
5. That Councillor Sweeting would liaise with the Chairman and the clerk to request further information on behalf of the Committee.

52.	<b>STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION 2017-18 (Agenda Item 8)</b>  Laurie Baker – Manager: Education Strategy and Quality, and Dan Kennedy - Deputy Director, Housing, Environment, Education, Health & Wellbeing Residents Services, introduced a report on Standards and Quality in Education 2017-
-----	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

18.

The key points of the report were summarised, and it was confirmed that overall academic performance within Hillingdon was strong. Attainment within Early Years had risen, alongside improved outcomes at both Key Stages within primary phases. Within the secondary phase, Key Stage 4 outcomes continued to improve and were outperforming national averages.

However, challenges remained. At post-16 level (academic A level), Hillingdon schools continued to underperform, with academic outcomes lower than national averages. Hillingdon was working to address these challenges, and improving outcomes for vulnerable groups remained a priority for 2018/19.

Members asked a number of questions:

**While overall improvement was recognised, a report to Cabinet setting out Hillingdon's performance versus other London boroughs had stated that, for one measure, Hillingdon's performance was rated as 29<sup>th</sup> out of the 33 boroughs. How was Hillingdon addressing this?**

Hillingdon had seen marked improvement in overall performance in recent years, and now ranked mid-table against statistical neighbours – the key comparator for Ofsted and DfE comparison - for most phase-specific key measures. However, it was understood that challenges remained in some areas and regular dialogue with head teachers and other stakeholders responsible for the direct delivery of education was taking place to highlight these challenges and to better determine the reasons for issues with performance, so that they could be addressed. Further information could be provided to the Committee, if Members wished to forward specific questions to the clerk.

**Attainment of white/English pupils, at both primary and secondary levels, was a concern. Why was this, and how could it be overcome?**

This issue reflected a London-wide and national performance trend that had been evident in Hillingdon for the last three years. The issue has a high profile at a local level and was being looked into in conjunction with head teachers and schools. Possible reasons included wider community issues for sub-groups within this cohort in Hillingdon and the comparison with high-performing pupils with English as a second language in the borough. In previous years, the school sector has led a cross-phase project to explore this challenge. In order to accelerate improvement a new project incorporating school improvement resources and wider Council teams was now being commissioned to look at improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for these pupils.

**Previous reports issued by the Department of Education and the House of Commons Education Committee had highlighted the performance of white/British pupils as a concern some time ago. Would it be sensible to focus on earlier years, such as Key Stage 1, to address the issues before they become more serious?**

Officers agreed that this would be sensible. Key Stage 1 and Early Years cohorts could be focussed on to instil higher aspirations which, it was hoped, would lead to better literacy and numeracy performance over time. It was likely that this would be a focus of the new project previously referred to.

Members suggested that an update report on this topic be considered for inclusion on

future work programmes.

**It was possible that a new Ofsted report on adult learning would be issued in the coming weeks. Could the Committee be briefed on its findings?**

The report could be made available to Committee Members, once available.

**What was being done to address children not in education, employment or training (NEET)?**

The cohort of NEET children was small, though were challenging to engage with. The Council and its partners needed to find ways to better engage and promote education and vocations to these young people. Moving forward, an area of focus would be a review of the success, or otherwise, of steps being taken to address the needs of NEET children.

Members requested that a report on NEET children be considered for presentation at a future meeting.

**The Participation Team offered a service to schools in Hillingdon to provide case-work and advice on matters of school attendance and exclusions. Could officers provide further detail on this service?**

Officers could provide details of this service to Members following the meeting. Exclusions were reducing, and reasons for this included an increased focus on working with schools to manage moves, as well as the adoption of other measures, such as split timetables. The nature of the issue and resultant potential risk of an exclusion would dictate what actions could be taken.

**What powers did the Council have to monitor the attainment of children being home-schooled?**

Council powers to inspect performance of home-schooled children were limited. Information held by the Council on such children included year groups and the reason for the choice to educate at home, but was dependant on parents engaging with the authority. New Government legislation was awaited, which would require parents to register their home-schooled children with a local authority. Further information could be provided to Members following the meeting.

**How could the Council challenge unauthorised absences from schools?**

Council powers varied according to the kind of school in question (i.e. academies). Penalty notices were issued for regular unauthorised absences, and while it was felt that these notices acted as a deterrent for parents, it was accepted that the notices were obviously punitive in nature. Often the reason for the absence was complex and included issues with family situations and vulnerable people. Strong casework, in conjunction with regular contact with families and schools, was important to address such issues. The Council was now reviewing its model for how such interventions were carried out.

**Had the number of Participation Team officers reduced?**

Staffing numbers had remained steady.

**Was home schooling subject to Ofsted Inspection?**

Home schooling was not subject to Ofsted inspection.

Members thanked officers for the report, and their efforts. Some Members requested that future reports to the Committee focus on Hillingdon's performance versus neighbouring authorities and other London boroughs.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted;
2. That a further information item on the performance of white/British pupils be considered for presentation at a future meeting;
3. That any future Ofsted report on adult learning be forwarded to Members, once available;
4. That a report on NEET children be considered for presentation at a future meeting;
5. That officers provide Members with additional information relating to the Participation Team's work to address exclusions; and
6. That officers provide Members with additional information on new Government legislation regarding Council powers to monitor and inspect children receiving home education.

**53. CABINET FORWARD PLAN (Agenda Item 9)**

**RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.**

**54. MULTI-YEAR WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 10)**

**RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.37 pm.

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