

THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT REVIEW TOPIC - SELECTION PHASE

Committee name	Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee
Officer reporting	Liz Penny – Democratic Services
Papers with report	Appendix A - Review topic selection scorecard
Ward	All

HEADLINES

To discuss ideas on suitable next major review topics by the Committee. To assist, this report gives guidance on the Committee's remit, an overview of how reviews can be undertaken, previous review topics and a scorecard to use to assess. On 6 April 2021, a number of potential topics were tabled by Members. It was agreed that the majority of these would be information items to be incorporated into the Work Programme. A Town Regeneration major review topic was suggested but, given the impact of Covid-19, this option is not deemed viable at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee consider potential topic ideas for their next major review for officers to scope further and report back to the Committee.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Committee's direct remit of activity

This Committee's specific Terms of Reference are set out below. This sets the parameters (or service areas) in which the Committee can undertake reviews, present findings, request reports and provide direct input on matters:

1. Democratic Services
2. Corporate Communications
3. Capital Programme - Major Projects
4. Repairs & Engineering (including housing repairs)
5. Building Safety / Facilities Management
6. Property & Estates
7. Corporate Finance
8. Procurement
9. Exchequer & Business Assurance Services
10. ICT
11. Legal Services
12. Human Resources
13. Business Administration
14. Business Performance
15. Customer Access
16. Business Improvement Delivery (BID)

This Committee also acts as lead select committee on the monitoring and review of the following cross-cutting topic:

- Resident Experience
- Strategic Partnerships
- Community Engagement

Undertaking policy reviews

Over the years, Policy Overview Committees have undertaken successful in-depth reviews of Council services and policies. This has resulted in a number of positive changes locally, with some also affecting policy at a national level. Such committees engage Councillors in a wide range of Council activity and build a greater understanding about service provision to residents.

Review phases

The typical phases of a review are as follows:

1. Selection of topic
2. Scoping the review / setting out objectives
3. Witness & evidence stage (this is the main activity)
4. Draft recommendations considered / early draft of review report
5. Final report approved by Committee
6. Referred to Cabinet for consideration
7. Monitoring the implementation of recommendations once approved / amended by Cabinet at meetings, i.e. in six months

Selecting review topics

It is always best to sound out potential review topics early on. In respect ideas of areas to review these can come from a variety of sources e.g. Committee Members; Council officers; External partners / residents and Cabinet Members. When a Committee considers a potential review topic, officers recommend running it past the following criteria as part of our scorecard (see Appendix A); i.e. topics that are:

- Resident-focused
- Under the correct remit of the Committee
- Matters the Council has influence over
- New issues
- Achievable for the Council
- Can gain wider organisational buy-in and support
- Drive improvement / efficiency
- Provide early warning or resilience for national changes
- Investigate the 'big issues' locally or nationally within Hillingdon

Witness and evidence stage

Ultimately, any Policy Overview Committee's efforts are at their best when external witnesses and residents participate, adding value to intelligence gathering and findings. In support of this,

Committees have undertaken a variety of both formal and informal activity “in meetings” and “outside meetings”. It is important to pull together a broad evidence base for any potential findings later on. Additionally, the ability for Councillors to bring their ‘local’ insight is highly valuable. Activities the Committee can undertake include:

- Surveys / social media
- Promotion of review to seek views
- Invite the relevant Cabinet Member to attend for their views
- Question key council officers
- Hold informal workshops
- Networking events, e.g. with partners
- Have closed meetings, i.e. confidential, such as social care clients
- Commission reports from council officers / externally
- Request data and intelligence on the topic
- Visits to other local authorities
- Undertake site visits within the Borough or council facilities
- Appoint experts or advisors to join the Committee throughout its review
- Selecting the best range of witnesses to get a real user / resident perspectives
- Invite national experts in their field

Whilst information will be provided to Councillors, it may be helpful when preparing for this stage of a review, that Councillors:

- Prepare their draft questions for each witness in advance;
- Read a witness bio or find out more about their organisation;
- Do their own additional research on the topic - you may find something officers don't!
- Use their network of councillors in other local authorities to seek views;
- Tell residents at Surgeries / Ward Walks about your review, get their thoughts.

Drafting recommendations / final report

After hearing from witnesses and receiving evidence, the Committee then will meet to pull together all the information and shape its collective findings. Any final recommendations that come to Cabinet ideally should:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review
- SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Affordable or can be aligned neatly with the MTFF process
- Based on a broad evidence base as possible
- Seek to review or amend existing approved policies (unless there is an imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider ‘conclusions’ as well as any specific recommendations.

Nearer this time, Democratic Services staff supporting the Committee will advise further on findings and drafting recommendations. Throughout this process, their role is critical to the Committee, to guide Members and secure the information and any witness activity that Members wish to undertake. They also work with the Chairman to bring the final draft report for the Committee before it is scheduled to Cabinet.

Previous reviews undertaken

Below is a list of recent reviews (within the Committee's revised remit) that have been undertaken and submitted to Cabinet. It is advised not to review an area that has been reviewed recently, unless there have been substantial changes in service provision.

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20/21
Corporate Complaints	Recruitment in Hillingdon	Combating Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying of Young People in Hillingdon	Community Safety and New Policing Structures in Hillingdon	Local Commerce, Employment, Skills and Job Creation in Hillingdon
			Digital Broadcasting of Policy Overview, Scrutiny and Select Committees	The Voluntary Sector Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

None at this stage, pending any findings approved by Cabinet.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Constitution

Appendix A – New review topic selection scorecard

Scores showing 1-5 (5 being the highest, 1 the lowest)										
Topic	Resident focused	Correct remit	Influence	New	Achievable	Wider organisational support	Drives improvement	Drives transformation and efficiency	National and local	Score

Detailed criteria to assess review scoring

Resident-focused - High impact on residents and the community, with public interest and scope for making a positive difference (whether universal or a targeted group or area, e.g. young people or a particular town centre)

Correct remit - is it covered in the Committee's Terms of Reference and does it cut across into the domain of other Committees? If it does, narrow the topic or consider suggesting the Chairman of the POCs consider setting up a task and finish review panel for this and which Committee to report back to.

Influence - A topic that affects residents, groups, businesses and other key stakeholders in Hillingdon and relates to a service, event or issue in which the Council is in control of, has a significant stake in or has influence over, e.g. with partners.

New - A new and fresh topic preferably. One which has not previously been reviewed by a Committee in the last 2-3 years, or which is not currently being reviewed by another Committee or internally.

Achievable - A good level of expertise, best practice and information is available to draw on to complete this review. Committee resources, departmental plans and organisational timings permit a successful review with positive recommendations, during the current municipal year. Is the review ToR too wide and need to be narrowed to be achievable? Will the Committee's work programme accommodate the review?

Wider organisational support - A topic that is likely to receive organisational buy-in from the Committee and wider Council. Possibly support from partner organisations to add value to existing work.

Drives improvement - a service or area of partnership that has been identified internally or externally that requires improvement in the medium-long term and would benefit from Members' insight. Performance risks or areas of consistent under-performance.

Drives transformation and efficiency - in support of the Council's objectives, any areas where service re-modelling is under consideration in the longer-term, that with Members' insight can help to deliver future savings, efficiencies and VFM.

National and local - a topic that will assist the Council in the implementation or awareness of external challenges, new legislation, national policy or the changing role of the public sector. A topic relevant to Hillingdon's residents that seeks to lobby change in national legislation, policy or practice.