

Minutes

CORPORATE, FINANCE AND PROPERTY SELECT COMMITTEE

3 June 2021

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman), Vanessa Hurhangee (Vice-Chairman), Lindsay Bliss, Farhad Choubedar, Tony Eginton (Opposition Lead), Raymond Graham and Richard Lewis</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Liz Penny – Democratic Services Officer John Wheatley – Senior Policy Officer, Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships</p>
4.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
5.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Councillor Tony Eginton declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 as his son was a member of the RAF reserves.</p> <p>Councillor Richard Lewis declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 as he was a member of the RAF reserves.</p>
6.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Members noted that the minutes of the meeting dated 20 May 2021 were purely a formality to record the election of the Select Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The timings were queried and it was suggested that the end time be amended to 9.09 pm..</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 20 May 2021 be agreed as an accurate record subject to an amendment to timings as discussed.</p>
7.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items of business were marked as Part I and would be considered in Public.</p>
8.	<p>SCRUTINY CALL-IN PROCEDURE (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p>

Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer, provided an overview of the Council's new scrutiny call-in procedure which Members had been appraised of prior to the meeting.

The Select Committee was advised that responsibility for scrutiny had been transferred to Members of the relevant Select Committees. Key things to note included:

- All Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions now clearly identified the relevant Select Committee – Members thereof could attempt to call-in a decision should they wish to do so;
- Decision notices clearly indicated the final date any call-in request could be made – 5 working days at 5pm after the date the decision notice was published;
- A Member of the Select Committee shown on the decision notice could initiate a call-in request. Members could not initiate a call-in on behalf of another select committee;
- All call-in requests would be submitted via the new Scrutiny call-in App details of which had been provided to all Councillors;
- Once submitted, the call-in request would be sent via an automated email to all Members of the relevant Select Committee;
- Councillors were not obliged to respond. However, should they wish to do so, they could approve or reject the request. The Councillor who initiated the call-in request would also need to respond;
- Should a majority of Members approve the request before the end of the scrutiny call-in period, it would become a valid call-in and Democratic Services would be notified;
- Only those requests that received a majority would be heard at a specially convened Select Committee meeting.

Members had no queries regarding the new procedure.

RESOLVED: That the new Scrutiny Call-in Procedure be noted.

9. **ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ARMED FORCES** (*Agenda Item 6*)

John Wheatly, Senior Policy Officer - Health Integration and Voluntary Sector Partnerships, presented the report.

Members heard that Hillingdon was home to a large Armed Forces community due to the presence of RAF Northolt and Northwood HQ. There were over 800 service people and families based in the Borough.

The Committee was informed that the Armed Forces Covenant was an agreement between the armed forces community, the nation and the government. The Covenant had two underlying principles:

- Members of the armed forces community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services; and
- Special consideration was appropriate in some cases, especially for those who had given the most such as the injured or the bereaved.

The Queen's Speech 2021 had announced the Government's intention to strengthen the Covenant by placing it on a statutory footing. Local authorities had to have due regard to the Covenant though it could be interpreted in different ways. Members heard

that the London Borough of Hillingdon had signed the Covenant in June 2012. The current Cabinet Scheme of Delegations gave the Leader of the Council the responsibility to oversee the Council's relationship with the Armed Forces. Additionally, Cllr Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE had become the new Armed Forces Champion on 14 January 2021.

In terms of housing allocation, the Committee was advised that the Council's current housing policy went beyond the statutory requirements by providing preference to armed forces personnel in its Social Housing Allocation Policy. The Council also attempted to accommodate the children of armed forces families, wherever possible, when allocating school places. A good relationship had been built up with London Region MOD.

The Committee heard that, in the past, Hillingdon had made two successful applications to the (now closed) community covenant grant scheme to help build stronger links between residents and armed forces personnel. These grants had helped the Council support Public Open Days at RAF Northolt. Fishing days had also been organised for returning armed forces personnel which had been well received. Moreover, all personnel who lived on the base were issued with a Hillingdon First card which gave them access to a range of discounts in the Borough. Members were advised that Hillingdon had been awarded a Silver Award under the Government's Employer Recognition Scheme, in recognition of the excellent support given to Reservists.

Members requested further information regarding St Andrews Park Estate in Uxbridge – a former large housing estate for RAF personnel – noting that many of the houses there had been unoccupied for a long period of time and were now in a state of disrepair. This seemed unacceptable, particularly in view of the housing shortage in the Borough. The Committee heard that this was a long-standing issue which would be very difficult to resolve. Cllr Lewis noted that, although the RAF had a responsibility to restore the housing to a reasonable condition, to do so would cost more than the value of the houses themselves. Members heard that the Ministry of Defence had a contract which had run for many years and was currently obliged to continue paying rent on the houses. Members enquired whether a Council compulsory purchase order would be an option. It was agreed that John Wheatley would discuss this matter further with colleagues in housing / planning and would provide the Committee with a full update at a later stage.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was agreed that John Wheatley would ascertain how many reserves there were in the Borough at present and what support was currently offered to them by the Council. At the request of Members, it was further agreed that Mr Wheatley would contact Hertfordshire Council to enquire whether there had been any liaison between Hertfordshire and Hillingdon in respect of housing allocation for Northwood HQ personnel.

Members enquired whether the Council currently liaised with the military as a partner to support those exiting the military with jobs, housing etc. It was agreed that this was happening to some extent but there was room for improvement and a dialogue could be initiated at an earlier stage to enable the Council and Armed Forces to work together more effectively.

RESOLVED That:

- 1. John Wheatley, Senior Policy Officer, discuss the St Andrews Park Estate**

housing issue further with colleagues in housing / planning and provide the Committee with a full update;

2. John Wheatley, Senior Policy Officer, ascertain how many reserves there were in the Borough at present and what support was currently offered to them by the Council;
3. John Wheatley, Senior Policy Officer, contact Hertfordshire Council to enquire whether there had been any liaison between Hertfordshire and Hillingdon in respect of housing allocation for Northwood HQ personnel; and
4. The Engagement with the Armed Forces report be noted.

10. **THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT REVIEW TOPIC - SELECTION PHASE** (*Agenda Item 7*)

It was noted that the previously suggested review topic of Town Regeneration would no longer fall within the remit of the new Corporate, Finance and Property Select Committee.

Members recommended that the Committee consider the Council's Business Performance Monitoring and Reporting as its next major review topic. Naveed Mohammed, Head of Business Performance and Insight, had presented a report to the previous Policy Overview Committee Members on 4 March 2021 and there had been some noticeable gaps in the data and reporting. Key points highlighted by the Committee in relation to the proposed review topic included:

- a lack of key metrics / monthly reporting to the Senior Management Team;
- strategic decisions not currently being made utilising the data and only some operational decisions supported by data;
- data quality issues;
- a requirement to better understand how the data was currently being used; and
- a need for monthly monitoring to establish where the Council was doing well / areas for improvement.

It was suggested that it would be useful to compare Hillingdon's Business Performance Monitoring and Reporting to that of other London boroughs.

Members noted the importance of data protection and cyber security. It was acknowledged that data breaches had a significant impact on a local authority both financially and in terms of damage to its reputation. It was agreed that these areas would be covered via an Information Governance and Cyber Security information item within the Work Programme.

At the request of Members, it was agreed that an information report regarding repairs and maintenance would be added to the Work Programme setting out the time taken to complete repairs and how successful these were. It would also be useful to establish whether a lack of maintenance led to increased repairs bills.

In response to Members' requests for clarification, it was confirmed that the Committee's Terms of Reference encapsulated both physical and online access. The contact centre would also be included. It was noted that some residents might find it difficult to access online services / the contact centre if they had a visual or auditory impairment.

The Committee suggested that a minor review be undertaken later in the year to consider procurement within the Council; the 80/20 split between quality and cost and

the use of local firms through the procurement process were matters of particular interest to Members. It was noted that local authorities were now at liberty to use local companies more readily since they were no longer bound by the Treaty of Rome.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee considered potential topic ideas for its next major review for officers to scope further and report back to the Committee;**
- 2. That an Information Governance and Cyber Security information item be added to the Work Programme (covering data protection); and**
- 3. That an information item regarding repairs and maintenance be added to the Work Programme.**

11. **FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 8*)

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan.

12. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 9*)

It was noted that the date of the Committee's July meeting had been amended and the meeting would now be held on 20 July 2021 at 19:30.

Members were informed that the recommendations of the previous Policy Overview Committee's review of the Voluntary Sector's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic had been agreed by Cabinet on 21 May 2021. Democratic Services would email the witnesses involved in the review to thank them for their input and to provide them with a copy of the final report.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Liz Penny of Democratic Services email the witnesses involved in the Voluntary Sector's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic review to thank them for their input and to provide them with a copy of the final report; and**
- 2. That the Committee noted the Work Programme 2021-2022 and agreed any amendments.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.10 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny on epenny@hillingdon.gov.uk or Tel: 01895 250185. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.