

Minutes

PUBLIC SAFETY AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

21 September 2021

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Keith Burrows (Chairman) Teji Barnes (Vice-Chairman) Richard Lewis Stuart Mathers Colleen Sullivan Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead) Steve Tuckwell</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Ian Anderson, Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries Poonam Pathak, Interim Head of Highways Steve Clarke, Democratic Services Officer</p>
23.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Kuldeep Lakhmana with Councillor Stuart Mathers substituting.</p>
24.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
25.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>A member of the Committee raised concerns that a number of items on the Committee's work programme were coming before the Committee as verbal presentations, rather than written reports; it was highlighted that this hindered the ability for the Committee to appropriately scrutinise reports ahead of meetings. It was noted that the 'Service Overview' items were currently being delivered to the Committee in a presentation format due to the nature of the items, going forward it was noted that all other regular items would be scheduled to be accompanied by a written report.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 28 July 2021 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
26.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS 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>

It was confirmed that all items were marked Part 1 and would be considered in public.

27. **SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW: ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUTURE POLICY DIRECTION FOR THE BOROUGH** (*Agenda Item 5*)

The Chairman briefly introduced the item highlighting that it was the first of three witness sessions composing the information gathering phase of the Committee's review into electric vehicles (EVs), EV infrastructure and future policy direction. The Democratic Services Officer then introduced the information report in front of Members as a brief research report outlining the national and local context for the current state of EV's and EV infrastructure.

Poonam Pathak, Interim Head of Highways, was present as the first witness for the review and noted that officers were working closely with the Cabinet Member for Public Safety and Transport in the development of an EV strategy, which would be informed by the Committee's review. It was highlighted that a key objective of any strategy would be to assist in achieving the carbon reduction targets set by the Council. The Committee were informed that officers had undertaken a soft market test with regard to publicly available EV charging point provision to understand the funding available in this area, specifically the 75% grant from central government under the ORCS funding (On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme) whereby only 25% of costs would be incurred by the Council. Additionally, officers had liaised with other London Boroughs to recognise the experiences and challenges faced when approaching the delivery of EV charging infrastructure; Members concurred that the prospective provision of EV infrastructure would be a challenge for all local authorities, specifically Hillingdon as the London Borough with the highest ratio of car ownership amongst residents.

It was highlighted that the Council currently had 11 sites in the Borough where publicly available EV charging was available, these 11 sites hosted over 30 charge points. The Committee were informed that these charge points were outdated and some were not in a good working condition. Officers planned to replace these charge points with updated models to suit modern EVs and to identify new locations in the Borough where there may be a demand for publicly available EV charge points, examples included Council operated car parks and housing estates. A tender exercise was currently being undertaken for the provision of these charge points. Members were interested in the distribution of charge points across the Borough as it would be key to the success of any prospective delivery of publicly available charging points; a Member highlighted that there was a grouping of charge points around Heathrow Airport in the south of the Borough leaving the rest of the Borough with less provision currently. Officers stated that decisions regarding the location of new charge points would be data led by demand.

The Committee queried what procurement frameworks were available and had been explored by officers with regard to EV charge point procurement. Members were informed that officers had explored numerous frameworks including Kent County Council, Transport for London and Crown Commercial Service procurement frameworks to engage with EV charging suppliers, including fully funded options with zero cost to the Council for the installation and maintenance of public charging points.

With regard to public demand for EV charge points, it was noted that currently there was not a significant demand or increase in demand however, an increase was expected over the coming years; it was highlighted that most charging would be expected to take place at an individual's residence. The Committee requested information on exactly how much demand was coming from residents.

Members noted that roughly one third of households in Hillingdon did not have off-street parking, notably those in terraced and flatted developments. The Committee sought to understand the rough distribution of households without off-street parking around the Borough. The Committee discussed the future of petrol stations and highlighted that many of the larger companies already had plans in place to convert stations to EV charging only which would play a large part in facilitating the transition to EVs.

Members highlighted that the report showed Hillingdon to be in the top 20% of local authority areas in the country for the number of EV charge points per 100 thousand people, specifically that the number did not reflect charge points that are publicly available and therefore was not truly representative from a public perspective. It was noted that the figures included charge points installed privately by workplaces in the Borough which were available to employees of the particular workplace but not the wider public.

The Committee also highlighted that, although the map of charge points provided in the report was useful for providing a context of the density of charge points in West London and areas adjacent to Hillingdon, its scope was too wide and it lacked clarity on the availability within the Borough itself.

With regard to planning policies, and to give the Committee a clearer picture of the requirements upon private developers relating to the provision of EV charging infrastructure, the Committee were minded to invite a representative from the Council's Planning Department to attend a future meeting as a witness. It was briefly noted that central government were introducing policies requiring all new developments to feature EV charging provision. Members raised concerns that developers may install cheaper EV charging units which deliver lower levels of power and therefore require longer charge times, creating charging pressures where multiple residents require access to the development's charging infrastructure. This was highlighted as becoming a potential problem as more residents transition towards EVs. With regard to future witnesses for the Committee's review, it was highlighted that prospective witnesses would be discussed through the Chairman with Democratic Services and that the Committee would be notified of who the witnesses were ahead of each session.

The Committee also discussed the fact that the provision of EV charge points was not a statutory requirement placed upon local authorities, however it was noted that this could change in the future. With regard to the Council's obligations, it was highlighted that the Council should be doing what it can to support the transition to EVs but the Council did not currently provide petrol stations or other such utilities, for example internet provision.

RESOLVED That the Committee noted the contents of the report and used the first session of the review to enquire as to the Council's existing stance on Electric Vehicles and EV Infrastructure.

28. **ANNUAL COMPLAINT & SERVICE MONITORING REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2020 TO 31 MARCH 2021** (*Agenda Item 6*)

This item was heard after item 7.

Ian Anderson, Business Manager - Complaints and Enquiries, introduced the report highlighting that the previous Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees had requested

further detail in the annual complaints reports which explained the high level of detail within the report's appendices. Overall, there had been an increase in the number of informal complaints than in previous years, with 30% of those progressing to stage one complaints; less than 2% of complaints went on to stage two. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigations had gone down from 59 for 2019/20 to 34 for 2020/21, this was primarily attributed to the Ombudsman deciding not to investigate complaints for roughly four months during 2020 to allow local authorities to focus on and carry out their core duties during the COVID-19 pandemic. Compliments had also increased significantly year on year from 301 to 502, with 12% of those compliments relating to the planting of wildflowers in the Borough.

The Committee were informed that the volume of Members Enquiries had gone down from 11,423 in 2019/20 to 9,960 in 2020/21. A discrepancy was highlighted in the 'Members Enquiries by Ward' data whereby Uxbridge South Ward had a significantly higher number of Members Enquiries than any other. It was explained that the system used to process Members Enquiries relied upon an address being entered, if no address was entered then the system would default to the Civic Centre which was within Uxbridge South Ward.

The Committee were informed that going forward, the annual complaints report would differ in that the Council's Corporate Directorates had changed for 2021/22. As a result of this Members would see a fuller picture of where complaints and compliments were spread between Council services.

The Committee thanked officers for the level of detail within the report noting that it helped to give a clear indication of the context around the complaints, compliments and Members Enquiries received by the Council. It was noted that as the May 2022 local government elections drew closer, there may be an increased number of Members Enquiries received.

Members attention was drawn to Appendix H which outlined the Ombudsman investigations which had concluded during 2020/21 and were within the remit of the Public Safety and Transport Select Committee. It was highlighted that many of the cases were closed by the Ombudsman without a formal investigation due to insufficient evidence. Members highlighted that residents may not always know what is meant by insufficient evidence and suggested that having the information available online as to what may constitute sufficient evidence would be useful, particularly where residents are disappointed with the Ombudsman's choice not to investigate and believe that they had supplied sufficient evidence. Officers noted that work was being done with the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team with regard to publicly available information around what can be provided as viable evidence for investigation. The Committee were informed that there was information available on the Ombudsman's website for cases that had not formally been investigated but a detailed explanation was given as to why no investigation took place, Members requested the information for four of the complaints listed in Appendix H.

With regard to the anonymity of officers where compliments had been received, the Committee were informed that the stance taken was not to release information about officers into the public domain; however, it was noted that there had been instances of corporate directors congratulating and thanking staff internally where compliments had been received.

The Committee queried whether the Council had received compliments with regard to the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic; officers informed Members that no

compliments had formally been received however it was highlighted that throughout such unusual circumstances residents may not have known what to expect from local authorities. A Member highlighted that, as the Mayor for 2020/21, she had received numerous compliments whilst engaging with residents around the Council's services during the pandemic.

RESOLVED That the Committee noted the contents of the report and provided comments to officers as appropriate.

29. **SERVICE OVERVIEW: HIGHWAYS** (*Agenda Item 7*)

This item was heard ahead of item 6.

Poonam Pathak, Interim Head of Highways, was present for this item and gave the Committee an overview of the work areas under her purview and how the department manages and maintains the Council's highways assets. It was highlighted that the team was responsible for Hillingdon's highways assets, which were valued at £1.2 billion. The extent of the team's responsibilities included:

- Road and pavement maintenance (700km of roads and 905km of pavements)
- Streetlighting – 31,200 streetlights and other illuminated street furniture
- Highways structures – 260 bridges and structures
- Road Drainage – 34,000 road gullies
- Street Works Coordination
- Highways Insurance Claims
- Highways Design and scheme delivery

Further to this it was highlighted that some of the Borough's road network was maintained by other authorities, notably the M4 and M25 Motorways were maintained by the Highways Agency and the principal A40 and A312 roads were managed by the Transport for London Road Network. Members were informed that deterioration of the highway network was accelerating as the burden from factors such as climate change, traffic load and works carried out by utility companies were increasing.

The Committee were informed that the Highways department had a forward planning programme of roads and footways that were scheduled to be resurfaced. In 2021/22 there were 44 roads and 66 footways scheduled to be resurfaced. The 2022/23 forward planning programme was under development with the department recently commissioning a condition survey, the data from which would identify the roads and footways for resurfacing and categorise the proper surface treatment.

With regard to the criteria required for a damaged carriageway or footway to be investigated by the Council it was understood that on a carriageway, a 40mm pothole or depression was required, whereas on a footway it was a 20mm pothole, trip hazard or loose/missing kerbs. Response times for works to be carried out were categorised ranging from emergency call outs for a temporary repair within four hours to less severe circumstances where a permanent repair would be carried out within three months. Members highlighted that vulnerable residents may trip on a defect of less than 20mm; the Committee were informed that defects were investigated based on a risk assessment and scored accordingly, the Council needed to strike a balance in assigning footway defects for repair to ensure the repair programme was affordable and 20mm was used widely by local authorities as a marker for repair.

With regard to streetlighting in the Borough, Members were informed that a Borough-

wide column replacement programme was in progress following a Borough-wide LED upgrade completed in 2019. It was noted that the streetlighting columns in the Borough were old and deteriorating, any columns deemed a risk would be prioritised for replacement.

The Committee were encouraged that the team regularly made use of RhinoPatch repairs for road surfaces, a technique by which the road surface was heated using infrared technology and could be remoulded, reducing carbon output and the materials needed. Officers noted that there were currently additional costs associated with this method of repair however if other authorities adopted similar methods, the costs would come down; the Committee highlighted the importance of carbon off-setting but emphasised the need for repair methods to be cost effective.

Members raised concerns that safety inspections may fail to identify all defects on a road or footway surface and may require multiple safety inspections. It was noted that safety inspectors undertook training and attended regular briefings on inspection procedures, they were following a detailed, risk-based process for their inspections.

The Committee queried how the quality of contractor's work was assessed by officers; officers noted that regular inspections were undertaken whilst the work was ongoing to assess whether the work was meeting specifications, it was also highlighted that external contractors were required to meet key performance indicators which monitor contractor performance.

With regard to standing water and drainage systems in the Borough, it was highlighted that the current budget for the Highways Department allowed for the maintenance of existing road drainage gullies but issues were often encountered in heavy rains and where the local water services company did not maintain the existing drainage infrastructure to a workable standard. It was highlighted that the local water services company had no planned improvement programme within the Borough. The Committee were minded to prompt the Council's External Services Select Committee to approach the local water services company to explore this further in a scrutiny capacity.

The Committee thanked officers for the incredibly challenging and broad work undertaken within the Highways Department which kept the Borough moving.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the officer's verbal report.

30. **SERVICE OVERVIEW: ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND ENFORCEMENT TEAM**
(Agenda Item 8)

RESOLVED: That the item be deferred to the October meeting of the Select Committee.

31. **FORWARD PLAN** (Agenda Item 9)

The Committee noted the items listed on the Forward Plan. The Democratic Services Officer informed Members that, since the publication of the meeting agenda, a new Forward Plan had been published with three additional items listed under the Public Safety and Transport portfolio for October's Cabinet meeting; these were the Street Lighting Term Contract Extension, the Updated Enforcement Policy and the Transport for London Local Implementation Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan.

32.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>The Committee noted that the 'Service Overview: Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement Team' item had been deferred to the October meeting of the Committee. Members requested that any presentation slides to be delivered to the Committee be circulated well in advance of the respective meeting to allow Members enough time to digest the information within.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the prospect of deferring the one-off service monitoring items listed for January 2022 to allow sufficient time to discuss the 2022/23 Budget Proposals report. It was noted that Democratic Services would discuss this with the Chairman and confirm which meeting the items had moved to.</p> <p>RESOLVED That the Select Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Noted the items listed on the work programme; and2) Deferred the ASBET Fines and Prosecutions and the Abandoned Cars one-off service monitoring items to a later meeting in 2022 to be confirmed by Democratic Services and the Chairman.
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.02 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steve Clarke – Democratic Services on 01895 250636. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.