

Minutes

ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND REGENERATION SELECT COMMITTEE

13 October 2021

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Alan Chapman (Vice-Chairman) Allan Kauffman Scott Farley (Opposition Lead) Janet Gardner Farhad Choubedar (In place of Nicola Brightman)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Neil Fraser, Democratic Services Officer Marion Finney, Customer Engagement Officer Cathy Knubley, Head of Waste Services Rod Smith, Head of Housing & Tenancy Management</p>
33.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brightman and Deville. Councillor Choubedar was present as Councillor Brightman's substitute.</p>
34.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
35.	<p>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 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items were listed as Part I and would therefore be considered in public.</p>
36.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Regarding minute 28, it was highlighted that the request for further information on affordable housing had been omitted. The clerk advised that this would be amended.</p> <p>Regarding minute 29, it was noted that the requested information on wildflowers and Ombudsman cases had been received.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2021 be approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment to minute 28 as outlined above.</p>

37. **REVIEW WITNESS SESSION 2 - ENGAGEMENT WITH TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Rod Smith – Head of Housing & Tenancy Management, and Marion Finney – Regulation and Engagement Manager, addressed the Committee to provide information to aid the Committee’s review. External witness in attendance were Mr Alan Clark - clerk to the Leasehold Association, Mrs Ros Jorge - Tenant representative, and Ms Natalie Lindsay - Tenant representative.

Officers outlined the results of a sample survey of 100 tenants and leaseholders. Of those surveyed, 77% were tenants, with 23% leaseholders; and had covered a wide variety of age, location and length of engagement with the Council. The questions asked mirrored those included in the STAR survey, which would survey circa 50% of the entire 13k customer base. The survey was confirmed as currently underway, and was expected to result in a return of 10%. The STAR survey, owing to its larger audience, would provide a greater level of detail from which further analysis could be undertaken, with a view to informing future strategy.

Feedback from the sample survey highlighted that the majority of respondents were broadly satisfied with the way in which Hillingdon was communicating with them. However, the data suggested there was room for improvement in all areas, and especially regarding how the service was liaising with residents prior to decisions being made, with officers suggesting that the service should prioritise ‘consulting’ with residents, rather than simply ‘informing’ them.

Some of the barriers preventing residents from becoming more involved in housing and other community activities within their local areas included a lack of time, disability or health, and a lack of awareness of how to become more involved. Overall, officers considered that the number of respondents who were willing to engage with the Council was positive.

Information was also provided by the external witnesses in attendance.

Mrs Jorge, a resident of Sutcliffe House, had been active in the community and with the Council through such bodies as the Better Neighbourhood team, Townfield Community Committee, among others, and who had undertaken a street/estate champion role.

Mr Clark, the clerk to the Leaseholders Association, was actively engaging with the Council on behalf of the Association’s 3k members.

Mrs Lindsay, a resident of Avondale Drive, had previously engaged with the Council through training initiatives to improve job prospects, as well as acting as secretary for her estate committee.

Feedback from the residents regarding their estates was that the estates were often in a state of disrepair or untidiness, with lifts often unusable or grounds suffering from a lack of maintenance. In addition, antisocial behaviour, including drug abuse, harassment, rough sleeping or entry by non-residents, was common. Additionally, it was felt that there was a lack of community sports and leisure activities provided, particularly for women and young people, which if in place, could foster stronger community ties, and promote mental and physical health.

In such instances, the witnesses would endeavour to contact the Council to report the issues on behalf of their community. However, where previously it had been easier to reach a specific officer directly, who would listen and understand the problem before acting to resolve it, contacting the Council now was often through the call centre, which then routed the resident to a department. Responses from those departments was often insufficient or delayed, with a lack of urgency to resolve issues and a lack of subsequent progress updates. In some instances, issues were not resolved at all. Mr Clark did highlight that, through his role as clerk, he maintained a list of Council officer contacts that he could reach directly, without having to go through the call centre.

It was suggested that a lack of officer numbers, and therefore officer time, could be responsible for these difficulties, together with the Council's reduction of meetings of bodies such as local housing forums, senate meetings, etc. It was suggested that the provision of a contact list to reach specific officers could go some way to addressing residents' difficulties when contacting the Council.

Feedback was that residents felt undervalued by the Council, and not listened to, and that more should be done to engage and empower residents through two-way communication and community involvement. Additionally, the Council needed to be seen to demonstrate firm, timely action where necessary, for example the addressing of antisocial behaviour, as resident perception was that not enough was being done to resolve such issues.

Officers advised that often, the Council would carry out a statutory consultation prior to decisions being made/acted upon, which was the legal minimum required. It was accepted that more could be done to provide a true collaborative approach to engagement, focussing on the priorities for tenants and leaseholders.

Officers advised that the feedback received would be used to inform the new engagement strategy, which, Members were reminded, was at a very early stage of formation. Officers suggested that the recommendations to Cabinet resulting from this review could include recognising the value of good quality engagement, together with the instruction to create and maintain of a range of engagement options which promoted and valued resident involvement and feedback through actions residents were comfortable with. In addition, it was recognised that Council resources should be aligned to the resolution of matters that were of importance to tenants and leaseholders.

The Committee thanked residents and officers for the information provided.

38. **LITTERING & FLY-TIPPING -UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING REVIEW** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Cathy Knubley – Head of Waste, provided the Committee with an update on the implementation of recommendations resulting from REESPOC's review of littering and fly-tipping within Hillingdon.

All recommendations were confirmed to have either been fully implemented, or were in various stages of implementation, as set out within the report. Exceptions included actions that had been reviewed but that had been deemed unfeasible (such as reference numbers for individual bins), or actions that had been delayed due to the pandemic (such as liaising with schools).

The Committee was advised that litter picking activities were active in all wards, though

resources were aligned to areas of greatest need. Members highlighted specific equipment available, such as brooms, that could be used. Officers advised that a review of equipment would be undertaken. The Committee also requested that officers work to build relationships between the ward teams and Ward Councillors.

Regarding prosecution of offenders, it was highlighted that this was lengthy process that required specific evidence to secure a successful prosecution, such as catching an offender 'in the act'. Waste officers were in regular contact with the Council's Legal team on such matters. It was accepted that some residents were unwilling to identify offenders, possibly for fear of reprisals. The service was endeavouring to encourage such reporting through resident engagement at roadshows, social media, etc. to drive such behaviours.

Regarding littering and fly-tipping hotspots, these were plotted onto maps following repeated reports, and used to identify areas requiring action. Moving forward, street cleansing teams were to be fitted with real-time tracking software which would allow further analysis and actions.

The Committee requested that a copy of ASBET's warning letter, and further information on the 'name and shame' actions, be provided following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

39. **RECYCLING IN HILLINGDON - INFORMATION REPORT** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Cathy Knubley – Head of Waste, introduced a report detailing recycling within Hillingdon.

The report was summarised, with food waste recycling, recycling roadshows, recycling within flats, and partnership working with the NHS all highlighted. The Committee was informed that the service had recently won an award for its work to process clinical waste, such as used needles.

The processing of food waste was confirmed to result in electricity as well as fertilizer material, and the use of food waste bags was being promoted during all interactions with residents. The changes to the processing of Dry Mixed recycling (DMR) to reduce waste contamination had resulted in significantly lower costs to the Council.

In terms of waste statistics, overall refuse being collected had risen, with a household recycling rate of circa 44%. This was felt to be a very positive number, though work remained to increase this further. As part of further promotion, a video on the subject of 'what happens to your waste' was being produced to help inform residents and promote good recycling behaviours.

The Committee requested that officers review the wording on food waste bags to signpost residents towards further recycling options, such as food waste caddies.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

40. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Consideration was given to the Cabinet Forward Plan, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

41.	WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>) Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme, and it was: RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.10 pm.

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