

Minutes

ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND REGENERATION SELECT COMMITTEE

25 November 2021

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Nicola Brightman Allan Kauffman Alan Deville Scott Farley (Opposition Lead) Janet Gardner Farhad Choubedar (In place of Alan Chapman)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director - Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services Paul Richards, Head of Green Spaces, Sport and Culture Neil Fraser, Democratic Services Officer Marion Finney, Customer Engagement Officer Rod Smith, Head of Housing & Tenancy Management</p>
42.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Chapman, with Councillor Choubedar present as his substitute.</p>
43.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
44.	<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 classed as Part 1 and would therefore be considered in public.</p>
45.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Regarding minute 38, the Committee requested that its thanks to officers be included. It was also confirmed that the requested ASBET letter had been received.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2021 be approved as correct record, subject to the above amendment.</p>

46. **UPDATE ON THE WORK OF GREEN SPACES AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE COUNCIL'S PARKS AND OPEN SPACES** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Paul Richards - Head of Green Spaces, Sport and Culture, provided the Committee with an update on the work of Green Spaces, and the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's parks and open spaces, during 2020-21.

The report was summarised, with the importance of the Borough's parks and open spaces to resident mental health and physical wellbeing during the covid-19 pandemic and periodic lockdowns highlighted.

Throughout the pandemic, parks and open spaces had remained open, and had seen a significant increase in visitors. To address the challenges that came with such an increase, staff numbers had also been increased to provide additional litter picking efforts alongside the installation of further bins and commercial waste units.

Opportunities for residents to take part in sport had continued, as restrictions allowed, and Green Spaces had worked closely with various sporting associations including the Lawn Tennis Association, the Football Association, and the English Cricket Board ensure equipment and locations were suitable for safe use. A new booking process for tennis courts had been introduced, sporting equipment such as goals and pitch markings had been provided, and further work was underway regarding a bid for funding for artificial wickets and practice nets. Children's playgrounds had been made available once restrictions had been lifted.

Ruislip Lido was seen as a key attraction for the Borough, and an important site for residents throughout the pandemic. To promote visitor and resident safety, and reduce traffic congestion, a one-way system around the Lido had been introduced alongside a limit on visitors on site at any one time. Additional staff were also on site to manage the increased number of visitors and their impact, including the increase in dog fouling, while a consultation was underway with nearby residents regarding potential parking measures.

Dog ownership in general had increased throughout the pandemic, and the Committee was reminded that commercial dog walkers were required to hold a licence, with enforcement action and penalties applied where required.

The work to enhance green spaces and promote environmental benefits had continued, including an increase in the planting of trees, plants and wildflowers, alongside innovations regarding maintenance and selection to promote better survival rates and biodiversity. Partnerships and advice had been sought with Trees for Cities, as well as Trees for Streets and Plantlife. Hillingdon had once again been granted the highest number of Green Flags nationally, retaining its title as the UK's greenest borough.

Floral displays and competitions had also continued, with judging carried out remotely. With regard to floral displays, locations for such displays were chosen to maximise resident enjoyment, taking into consideration footfall, visibility, and suggestion requests from Ward Councillors. A Council contract with a third party for the production and maintenance of displays was in place, though plantings were supplemented by Uxbridge BID. Where plant growth was reported to affect driver or pedestrian visibility (and therefore safety), officers would take immediate action to cut the growth.

Regarding tree planting, and the prevention of new plantings being ripped out by

vandals, it was accepted that this was a challenge to overcome. To combat this, the team had piloted the planting of smaller trees and saplings, but in greater numbers, in Long Lane. It was hoped that this would result in a greater 'root to shoot' ratio with better tree development over time, and would also have the benefit of reducing the amount of grass cutting and maintenance required. The initiative would be rolled out to other areas moving forward.

Smart technology and electrical equipment was being used, or explored for use, to ensure an integrated approach to weed control, thereby reducing chemical usage and a reliance on traditional fossil fuels to power equipment.

The Council's Conservation and Countryside officers regularly reviewed the Borough's watercourses to promote water flow and prevent flooding, alongside volunteers.

On engaging with the public, officers continued to help and support litter picking and other volunteer groups with equipment or advice (including legal advice, where necessary).

It was accepted that the waiting lists for allotments had increased throughout the pandemic, owing to an increase in resident interest compounded by a moratorium on enforcement action to remove allotments that were not being used/maintained. Officers would be aiming to reduce waiting list numbers through review action moving forward, alongside an update of the Terms and Conditions for users.

The Committee asked whether the new charges for tennis courts had been means tested to that low-income families weren't disproportionately affected. Officers advised that the pricing structure was regularly reviewed, and potential 'season passes' or other pricing structures could be implemented in the future.

The Committee thanked officers for the report and their efforts throughout the pandemic. It was requested that the number of residents sponsoring trees be confirmed following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

47. **REVIEW FINDINGS - 'OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS - IMPROVING PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND SATISFACTION' (Agenda Item 6)**

The Committee considered the draft recommendations to Cabinet resulting from their review into engagement with tenants and leaseholders, circulated prior to the meeting.

The clerk confirmed that the intent of the recommendations was to provide the parameters for the suggested strategy and delivery plan, allowing officers the agility to amend those plans in response to future resident feedback. The Committee was reminded that the recommendations included a suggestion that officers attend future meetings at regular intervals to allow the Committee to monitor the success of the strategy and delivery plan, and milestones achieved, in light of that further resident feedback.

Members suggested that the draft recommendations make specific reference to the negative feedback received from the witnesses at the previous information gathering session. The clerk advised that the suggested recommendations included a request that Cabinet acknowledge resident feedback received, alongside the requirement for

continued improvement. The rationale for the recommendations, supported by evidence, would be set out in greater detail in the body of the forthcoming report to Cabinet itself.

The Committee was reminded that the resident feedback received so far was based on a small subset of tenants and leaseholders and further, larger, consultations would be carried out as the strategy and delivery plans progressed.

It was requested that the first recommendation be amended to highlight feedback received from residents in person versus feedback received from online surveys. It was agreed that the wording of this recommendation could be reviewed.

It was requested that delegated authority be granted to the clerk to undertake the requested amendments, or any further amendments necessary, in consultation with the Chairman.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the draft recommendations be approved subject to amendment as suggested; and**
- 2. That delegated authority be granted to the clerk to undertake the requested amendments, or any further amendments required, in consultation with the Chairman.**

48. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Consideration was given to Cabinet's Forward Plan, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet forward Plan be noted.

49. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme.

Regarding the forthcoming information items on the topics of HMOs and empty properties, it was requested that any requests for detail to be included in the reports be forwarded to the clerk. To aid Members, it was agreed that the clerk would circulate suggestions previously put forward by the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.15 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.