

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

24 November 2022



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman) Colleen Sullivan (Vice-Chairman) Scott Farley (Opposition Lead) Janet Gardner Ekta Gohil Sital Punja Peter Smallwood</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Manager Stuart Hunt, Head of Green Spaces Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Also Present: Chief Inspector James Herring, Metropolitan Police Inspector Dan Lipinski, Metropolitan Police Ayodeji Ogunyemi, Head of Service - Ealing and Hillingdon</p>
30.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
31.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
32.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 19 October 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
33.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THOSE MARKED PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items of business were marked Part I and would be considered in public.</p>
34.	<p>CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY - POLICE AND PROBATION SERVICE (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Ayodeji Ogunyemi, Head of Service – Ealing and Hillingdon Probation Service, presented the Committee with information regarding the Probation Service. Key points</p>

highlighted included:

- In October 2022, the Probation Service in Hillingdon was managing 589 males in the community, 341 in custody and 63 females in the community, 10 in custody. In terms of ethnicity, the highest proportion was white British, followed by 'not recorded' and black;
- In terms of criminogenic needs, key factors associated with offence-related behaviours in Hillingdon were lifestyle and associates, thinking and behaviour, attitudes and employment, training and education;
- To assist in addressing these offence-related behaviours and reducing the risk to the public, a number of service providers attended the Probation offices. The Probation Service had its own internally accredited 'Thinking Skills Programme' to assist with improving attitudes, thinking and behaviour. This would include those who felt their offending was warranted;
- Commissioned service providers included employment support (Maximus, Advance Minerva); ARCH to assist those with substance issues; HAWK, St Mungo's and Trinity to assist with accommodation needs both for those in custody and in the community; SGO (Serious Gangs and Organised Crime) - an internal department to assist in addressing violence and gang-related behaviours focus which was a significant factor in Hillingdon; CF03 to assist with employment, training, education, finances and obtaining ID and benefits;
- Hillingdon Probation Service had an office based in Uxbridge - support services were in attendance at set times each week to ensure a collaborative approach, offer support and assess risk;
- Enforcement action – failure to engage with Probation Services could result in offenders being taken to Court or returned to custody if the risk was deemed to be unmanageable in the Community;
- Re. Uxbridge Magistrates, regular bi-monthly meetings were held with the sentencers to discuss concerns and provide updates. Meetings were also held with the District Judge;
- Probation services attempted to complete quality reports swiftly and made recommendations to sentencers as to the appropriate course of action for each individual on probation;
- Sentencers were invited to provide feedback re. how probation services engaged with them. A float Probation practitioner was available to pick up cases on the day to aid swift justice. An additional external regional resource was also available to assist in writing pre-sentence reports to free up Hillingdon staff to complete on the day reports;
- Ealing and Hillingdon Probation Services had been inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in October 2022 and had received an 'inadequate' score of 3 out of 27 - this was a very disappointing score. The report highlighted the impact of the pandemic, unification and staff shortages but the service had been judged on the expectations of the Inspectorate;
- The Quality Improvement Delivery Plan included adoption of the Prioritising Probation Framework (PPF) – due to staff shortages, there was a need to focus on high-risk cases and senior probation officers had oversight of this risk. The Inspectorate report had noted that support services were well used in Hillingdon and staff made significant referrals to the services available to them.

In response to their requests for clarification, the Committee heard that the figures set out in the inspection report were publicly available on the HM Prison & Probation Service website. It was confirmed that there were no probation services nationwide rated 'good' or 'outstanding' at present.

Members requested further clarification as to the improvements planned to address the concerns raised in the inspection report. The Committee was advised that a regional action plan for London was being produced. In Ealing & Hillingdon, there was a focus on court work and engagement with sentencers; staff were being moved around to aid swift justice; practitioners had been asked to highlight the work required / outstanding for each case in their workloads and senior practitioners had oversight of this.

In response to their queries, Members were informed that the next inspection was likely to take place in 2025. By that time the impact of the pandemic would be significantly reduced. Unification of the National Probation service and Community Rehabilitation Companies had taken place in June 2021 and had had a dramatic impact on the Probation Service - this unification task was ongoing and the required changes were still being implemented. The situation would be far improved by the time of the next inspection in 2025. In respect of staffing, there was a 40% deficit in staff numbers within Hillingdon Probation Service at present. Work arounds were in place to manage the risk and attempts were being made to recruit and retain more staff. Approximately 600 probation trainees were due to join the Probation Service in London hence it was anticipated that the staffing situation would be far improved by 2025. It was confirmed that, to address the concerns raised in the report, better processes would be in place by the time of the next inspection. It was recognised that, in terms of rehabilitation, there was a lot more work to do and the Probation Service was working hard to achieve this - at present there was a primary focus on riskier individuals, but it was noted that rehabilitation was also key.

Noting the staffing deficit of 40%, as a result of which the Probation Service was currently operating at 60% delivery, Members requested further clarification regarding benchmarks and best practice. It was confirmed that the Prioritising Probation Framework (PPF) allowed local Probation Services to temporarily move away from the National Standards in order to allocate resources to the most high-risk cases. The most pressing cases would be prioritised over lower risk cases where individuals did not currently present a serious risk of harm to the public. Once the staffing situation improved, Ealing and Hillingdon Probation Service would once again be managed in accordance with the PPF National Standards.

In response to further questions from Members, it was confirmed that, in order to address the concerns raised by HM Prison and Probation Service, 96.5% of cases in Ealing and Hillingdon had now been reviewed – there were 50 cases left to work on and this piece of work would be completed by the end of the following week. Senior managers had oversight of all cases and decisions were reached based on the current level of risk.

Members noted that training was an issue highlighted in the inspection report. The Committee was reassured that a regional plan was in place to ensure all practitioners completed their mandatory training by the end of March 2023. Additional local and national bespoke training would follow for practitioners and senior managers to ensure robust oversight of all cases.

At the request of the Committee, it was agreed that Democratic Services would investigate why the Probation Service had not replicated the Metropolitan Police's tri-Borough format.

Chief Inspector James Herring of the Metropolitan Police addressed the Committee to

present an overview of Hillingdon's Crime Performance. The Committee heard that the Borough priorities were to counter violence, particularly Violence Against Women and Girls, and increase trust and confidence in the Police. It was confirmed that the new Commissioner, Mark Rowley, was now in post. His tag line was "More Trust, Less Crime" and "Higher Professional Standards."

Chief Inspector Herring was in charge of neighbourhood policing covering the boroughs of Ealing, Hillingdon and Hounslow. He worked closely with independent advisory groups across all three boroughs and a recent meeting for Hillingdon had been very successful – new members had been recruited and younger members were acting as a critical friend to the police. There had recently been issues with resourcing linked to "Operation Bridges" (following the passing of Queen Elizabeth II), Just Stop Oil and a recent state visit, whereby police officers had been asked to work in other boroughs; particularly in central London. Concerns raised in a recent report by Baroness Casey regarding behaviour and conduct had led to self-reflection and steps were being taken to increase trust and confidence in the police. The Commissioner had taken part in interviews to promote the way forward. On 21 October 2022, the Commissioner had visited the Borough to meet team officers, local authority chief executives, community and faith leaders and senior managers.

Members heard that, since 7 November 2022, changes had been introduced across the Metropolitan Police with more resources allocated to immediate response teams, a reduction in 'aid' (help for other boroughs) and the recruitment of 1600 new PCSOs. More changes were to follow across all the boroughs. It was reported that the Hillingdon funded team was doing an excellent job and liaised regularly with Jacqui Robertson in community safety. There had been no critical incidents since the last reporting. Ways in which to serve the community better were being explored with an increase in walks and talks, positive activity initiatives and the street safe system.

Inspector Dan Lipinski of the Metropolitan Police addressed the Committee. Members heard that there was a focus on intelligence-led policing. Weekly intelligence-led meetings were held to address issues related to Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), community safety, robbery, burglary, violence etc. Each matter was allocated an owner to ensure it was dealt with efficiently. Focussed patrols took place in problem areas identified by analytics.

A significant period of change was under way and confidence and trust were key areas of focus. Training and one-to-ones with staff were paramount to achieve this. The senior leadership team engaged heavily with officers and a new scheme called 'Connect' was being rolled out to streamline policing. The scheme would finish on 29 November and it was hoped it would yield good results going forward.

In relation to drug convictions and charges between 2019-2022, Members heard that Hillingdon West Area had been the top achiever across the Metropolitan Police. Regular meetings were held with Central London and in relation to critical staffing levels. The last Independent Advisory Group meeting had been a great success and partnership working was paramount. It was confirmed that a number of projects were in progress. The Mutual Gain Project had recently been completed; this was a Metropolitan Police funded project enabling local communities to support vulnerable members of the community and had been useful in establishing links between the Police and gatekeepers of local vulnerable groups. External funding was also being sought to support these groups, for example from Brentford Football Club.

The Committee was informed that social media was a very useful platform. Information was collated across the entire West Area to keep the public informed of the good work being carried out by the Police on the ground. Members heard that attempts were being made to get Safer Neighbourhood Boards up and running. Measures were being put in place to reach out to and support local communities in the Borough including the Somali, Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities. This was a slow process but it was very important to build trust.

Members heard that the Police worked closely with the Council on "Street Safe" which was a scheme encouraging residents to report areas where they did not feel safe. The Police also worked closely with partners using CCTV to reduce crime in the Borough. Other ongoing projects to address VAWG included Operation Confidence and Operation Onyx – these were Met-funded free self-defence exercise and empowerment projects which had been extremely successful and were being rolled out across the West Area.

It was acknowledged that there had recently been an increase in crime linked to socio-economic issues. The Police were working with the Business Improvement Group and local companies to educate and raise awareness in relation this. With regards to VAWG, hospitality staff were being trained on how to recognise someone who may be in need of help. Other local initiatives included 'Coffee with a Copper', knife arch operations to discourage crime in the area and walk and talks to engage with the public. With regard to OWL (Online Watch Link) the local police were tripling the inputs; however, there was always room for improvement and local communities were encouraged to engage with the police and take part in safer neighbourhood boards.

The Committee was advised that, in terms of stop and search monitoring, Hillingdon was consistently in the top three in relation to supervision thereby ensuring best practice. Members of the public were also invited to view and give feedback on body-worn footage. Members heard that the Hillingdon Partnership Tasking Team was at the beck and call of the Council - every request raised by Hillingdon's tasking groups had been addressed with impressive results.

In response to Members' requests for clarification, it was confirmed that Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil protests had had a significant impact on policing across London. It had been necessary to move officers around to deal with the protests. Despite their frustration, members of the public were not encouraged to take matters into their own hands.

At the request of Members, it was agreed that Inspector Lipinski would bring some bells and alarms to the upcoming White Ribbon Day event. It was noted that the police wished to engage more with local communities, but this was often challenging due to a lack of trust. Positive initiatives were being introduced such as Walk and Talks and police hubs in an attempt to address this. It was agreed that flyers promoting the Safer Neighbourhood Teams would be provided by Chief Inspector Herring for display in the Civic Centre reception.

In response to Members' queries, it was confirmed that officers had a very good working relationship with the Council and weekly Friday meetings were held with the Community Safety Lead. A new initiative had been developed whereby a Councillor would be asked to attend Ward Panel meetings to ascertain whether something was a Council or Police matter.

Members observed that 'Coffee with a Copper' events were to be welcomed; however, more notice would be beneficial. Councillors Farley and Punja reported that they had recently been on a ride-along in Yiewsley with Officer Khan which had been very informative. In response to further questions, it was confirmed that the Met aspired to recruit 1600 new PCSOs across London - the target for Hillingdon had yet to be confirmed.

Members noted that the figures for pedal cycle enabled and moped enabled crime were low and enquired why this was the case as the problem appeared to be quite prevalent. The Committee heard that at present violence was being prioritised over low-level ASB. However, officers were aware of the issue and were working to address it. In respect of drug crime, Members welcomed the drop of 45% year on year – in respect of this, it was confirmed that officers were working to tackle specific county lines at present.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the contents of the reports and asked questions in order to clarify matters of concern or interest in the Borough; and**
- 2. That Democratic Services investigate why the Probation Service had not replicated the Metropolitan Police's tri-Borough format.**

35. **COMMUNITY COHESION AND PREVENT** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Manager, addressed the Committee informing Members of the work being undertaken to build stronger communities, promote community cohesion and manage the risk relating to extremism.

Members heard that health inequalities had been highlighted by the pandemic, particularly within certain communities. The team had led on reaching out to those communities across the Borough and established an action plan in partnership with health colleagues and H4All.

Members were informed that the Council had a statutory duty to deliver against Prevent in order to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation and keep communities safe. In respect of Protect duty, there was currently no legislative requirement for organisations to consider; however, the proposed Protect duty legislation was due to be presented to Parliament imminently and would have implications for partnership working in the future. It was confirmed that Central Government would also be reviewing the whole of its Contest strategy which would include Prevent and Protect - the changes would be published next year.

In response to questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that there were no education or religious settings of particular concern in Hillingdon at present. Referrals were spread across the Borough and were increasingly of an extreme right-wing nature. The situation was becoming more complex with a mix of people vulnerable to radicalisation. Isolation during lockdown had also had a significant impact. In terms of support for referrers, a website and dedicated reporting line were available to enable people to make referrals anonymously. Referrals from professionals were treated with care and details of referees would not automatically be shared. Members were informed that training was provided to communities and professionals to raise awareness of radicalisation / extremism and how to report concerns. It was noted that

not all unpalatable views constituted extremism, but views and behaviours could still be concerning; this was a complex area which needed to be managed and the team was available to assist and give advice. It was important that the response was proportionate.

In response to further questioning, the Committee heard that the Hate Crime Upstanders Programme was a training programme originally aimed at staff and volunteers within voluntary or community groups. It had since been expanded to include some Council services such as libraries. The training raised awareness of hate crime, how to report it and how to support people who needed help. The aim was to encourage local communities and groups to speak up and assist the Council in better understanding what was going on in the community. Those who had undertaken the training had an opportunity to meet on a monthly basis to share issues and give feedback. To reach into communities, it was acknowledged that it was easier to engage with known community leaders of local community groups rather than with every individual. However, the Team, in working collaboratively with those community leaders and active community members, alongside a wide range of partners, aimed to reach out as widely as possible. It was acknowledged that more could always be done. Engagement with Ward Councillors would be welcomed and encouraged in the future.

Members requested further clarification regarding the use of the term 'radicalisation' and enquired how the rise in right-wing extremism was being addressed. It was confirmed that radicalisation covered all aspects of extremism and was an overarching term which included different ideologies, including the extreme right wing. It was acknowledged that most people associated the concept of radicalisation to Islamist inspired ideologies and this was how people tended to view Prevent. However, this was misleading and Prevent aimed to support anyone who was vulnerable to radicalisation no matter what the ideology. Ideologies were emerging and changing and becoming more complex all the time. It was confirmed that Hillingdon was a non-priority Borough at present but had a safeguarding duty to provide support to all individuals that were vulnerable to radicalisation.

RESOLVED: That the Select Committee:

- 1. Noted activity undertaken to build stronger communities and promote community cohesion particularly in light of the needs emerging from the pandemic and current cost of living challenges;**
- 2. Noted the activity that had been undertaken during the past year in relation to delivering against the Prevent duty; and**
- 3. Noted the implications of the impending Protect Duty.**

36. ALLOTMENTS UPDATE (*Agenda Item 7*)

Stuart Hunt, Head of Green Spaces, provided the Committee Members with an update on allotments sites in the Borough. The Committee was advised that the Terms and Conditions were currently being overhauled. An Allotments Officer had been recruited and plots were being allocated to ensure parity and fairness.

In response to Members' questions, the Committee was informed that there was no evidence to suggest that cannabis was being grown at allotment sites. Sites were checked regularly to ensure they were being used appropriately.

Councillors requested clarification regarding security and safety at allotment sites in the

	<p>Borough. It was confirmed that sites were secured using a standard padlock which was readily available. This rarely presented any issues; however, a combination padlock could be provided if necessary.</p> <p>Members heard that self-managed sites could make some decisions independently – other matters required Council input. It was confirmed that those aged 65 and over were required to provide proof of age in order to secure a plot free of charge. All allotment plot holders were contacted annually to ensure they were cultivating their plots appropriately; a non-cultivation notice would be issued if they were not. The Team was considering reducing the size of plots in the future, especially for new starters, to make them more manageable.</p> <p>In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that younger people were becoming more interested in allotments. Diversity was also increasing across the sites in the Borough. In terms of administration, the allotments system had not yet been linked to ‘My Account’ but this could be reviewed in the future.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the update set out in the report.</p>
37.	<p>EMPTY HOMES COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM MINOR REVIEW - DRAFT FINAL REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the report and noted the inclusion of a short section in relation to publicity of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Premium policy if agreed by Cabinet.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents’ Services Select Committee agreed the draft report and updated recommendations to Cabinet and delegated any minor amendments to Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chairman and Labour Lead, prior to submission to Cabinet.</p>
38.	<p>EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM - DRAFT CABINET REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 8a</i>)</p> <p>The discussion of this item was included within agenda item 8.</p>
39.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
40.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members requested that the following items be included in the 2023/24 Work Programme – Strategic Climate Action Plan Annual Update and an Annual Update on Engagement with Tenants and Leaseholders. In response to Members’ requests for clarification, it was confirmed that the Strategic Climate Action Plan had been postponed twice; once due to changes to the work programme following the death of Queen Elizabeth and once due to staff changes - a new officer had been recruited very recently and needed to gain a better understanding of the role prior to addressing the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents’ Services Select Committee considered the Work Programme report and agreed to the suggested amendments.</p>

	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.08 pm.
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These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny on 01895 250185 or epenny@hillington.gov.uk
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