

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

26 September 2023



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman), Darran Davies, Scott Farley (Opposition Lead), Janet Gardner, Ekta Gohil, Sital Punja and Peter Smallwood</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Superintendent Anthony Bennett, Metropolitan Police Service Inspector Ben Wright, Metropolitan Police Service</p> <p>Officers Present: Andy Goodwin, Head of Strategic Finance Ceri Lamoureux, Head of Finance for Place Richard Webb, Director - Community Safety & Enforcement</p>
14.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Colleen Sullivan with Cllr Darran Davies substituting. Cllr Sital Punja had previously advised that she would be arriving a little late.</p>
15.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
16.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 14 June 2023 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
17.	<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 in Part I and would be considered in public.</p>
18.	<p>SAFER HILLINGDON PARTNERSHIP AND METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Richard Webb, Director of Community Safety and Enforcement, presented the report. The Committee heard that the previous Safer Hillingdon Partnership (SHP) strategy had concluded earlier in the year. A review of priority themes for the Partnership was underway with a focus on ways in which to meet the new duties of the SHP. A needs assessment would be completed, and it was anticipated that the new strategy would be</p>

published by the end of January 2024. The priorities of the Partnership were likely to include domestic abuse, Violence against Women and Girls, drugs, antisocial behaviour and other violent crime, including knife crime. Money had been made available from central Government to tackle drugs and alcohol issues, recognising that these were a significant driver of crime - there would be a new Drugs and Alcohol Partnership in Hillingdon.

Superintendent Anthony Bennett provided an update on the work of the Metropolitan Police Service. He confirmed that he was now Neighbourhood Superintendent for Hillingdon therefore was no longer responsible for Ealing and Hounslow. Response Teams and HQ still sat centrally within the West Area Basic Command Unit (BCU).

It was noted that in 2022, post-Covid restrictions and lockdowns, footfall across Hillingdon had increased both during day and night-time periods. In Hillingdon there had been an increase in robbery which mirrored the London wide picture.

Members heard that tackling violent crime and a focus on addressing Male Violence Against Women and Girls were priorities of West Area BCU across 2022 and into 2023 which had helped the Borough to experience no rise in violence against the person crime and a 1% reduction in sexual offences. The focus on tackling violence crime in Hillingdon had also resulted in a 13% reduction in knife crime with injury.

It was confirmed that Hillingdon had seen a steady decline in sanction detection rates over a number of years which had been driven by factors including a reduction in police numbers and the reliance on police to fill the gap for other services, such as responding to clients in mental health crisis. In 2022/23, Hillingdon's sanction detection rates had stood at 7% for all offences against an MPS-wide figure of 7.3%.

In respect of trust and confidence, it was confirmed that corrupt officers and staff were actively being rooted out and recruitment and training were being reviewed.

Emergency Response Policing Teams (ERPTs) responded to emergency calls and dealt with ongoing incidents - demand was increasing and resourcing was a challenge. In 2022, West Area BCU had received a total of 86,392 calls for service – Hillingdon accounted for 31% of these calls at 26,831 which represented a 2.5% increase on the previous 12 months.

Resourcing continued to be challenging but a large number of posts had been filled in the last year. The new London Plan sought to focus on front line and neighbourhood policing. In terms of diversity, the MPS aspired to have a representative workforce that mirrored the population of London. Neighbourhoods West Area had a dedicated team which lead on recruitment activity.

The Select Committee heard that Neighbourhood police teams in Hillingdon had undertaken activity during 2022 to improve the safety of women and girls. Initiatives had included StreetSafe – a self-reporting tool which enabled people to report areas where they felt unsafe, focus groups, self defence classes, enhanced uniform and plain clothes patrols in hot spots and work with CCTV officers at Hillingdon Council.

With regards to Stop and Search, it was confirmed that a number of work streams had been progressed and developed to address any disproportionality issues. These included Youth Scrutiny Panels, Community Monitoring Groups, reviews around Section 60s and the involvement of young people in Police Officer training sessions. It

was acknowledged that black ethnic groups were still being stopped disproportionately but the situation was improving. A Stop and Search Charter was being discussed to reduce disproportionality.

Members were informed that Op Nightingale had been initiated in 2022 and focussed on Uxbridge. It would continue through 2023 and Hayes Town was now included. The aim was to increase uniform police present in key demand locations. Ask for Angela was an ongoing piece of work. Police officers had also been working with male students in colleges to raise awareness of the law around harassment and what was / wasn't acceptable behaviour.

A Pan-BCU weekly violence meeting took place every Thursday to review and address serious violence, VAWG, burglary and robbery. This was a useful opportunity to review trends and hotspots.

One of the local challenges was residential burglary offence sanction detection rates. One change had been the implementation of a Forensic Conversion Team to focus on dealing with forensic lifts from burglary scenes.

Councillors heard that the MPS was also experiencing challenges in terms of the level of Detective experience. A number of schemes had been introduced to address this including the direct entry detective scheme.

With regards to domestic abuse, Hillingdon had seen an increase in recorded domestic abuse crime in recent years. West Area had continued to see the highest volume of domestic abuse incidents and offences across the MPS with over 17,450 incidents and 10,900 offences over the past year – 11.6% and 11.4% of the Met's total figures. This was a matter of concern and initiatives were underway to attempt to drive these figures down. West Area BCU had the fourth highest volume of all sexual offences, with rape offences accounting for about 37%. The Predatory Offender Unit (POU) had been launched in 2020 to tackle high harm repeat offenders against vulnerable members of society, particularly women and children. In 2022, WA's POU had arrested almost 300 suspects.

The Committee was advised that the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) dealt with complaints from the public, internal grievances etc. The main aim locally for the next year was to become more proactive and look at patterns of misconduct with a view to providing training and resolving issues before they escalated. In terms of the new Met for London Plan, key areas of focus would include increasing the number of PCSOs and Neighbourhood Inspectors.

Members requested further clarification in respect of local recruitment. It was confirmed that 14 PCSOs were to be recruited in 2024 increasing to 36 after two years. There was a commitment to 2 officers per ward and all vacancies on ward teams were being filled. The Met was trying to limit other distractions so officers could focus on their local work. The Right Care, Right Person initiative was due to come in on 1 November 2023. It was anticipated that neighbourhood officers would be freed up to engage more with local residents thereafter.

Councillors enquired how residents could contact the Safer Neighbourhood Team to report issues. It was acknowledged that there was a need for further clarification as to when residents should call 111 or 999. Ward team contact numbers and email addresses were being checked and would be promoted in newsletters. Further

advertising was needed to clarify the correct numbers to call and when to call them.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that emergency response officers did not routinely ask victims if they had been raped. The focus was on arresting the perpetrator at the scene. Specialist trained officers would subsequently speak to the victim to solicit further information and seek to explore other issues.

Members enquired whether it would be possible for Councillors to attend Gold Groups again in the future. It was agreed that this request would be explored further with a view to involving Councillors in Gold groups on a more regular basis. However, Members were informed that Ward Teams should already be keeping Councillors and MPs updated on matters of note.

Councillors were informed that experienced officers were being used to backfill Safer Neighbourhood Team posts. With regards to social media, Members observed that Ward Safer Neighbourhood Teams tended to use Twitter. This was a concern as many Hillingdon residents did not use Twitter and therefore did not receive the information provided by the SNTs. It was confirmed that the Police preferred to use Twitter, together with OWL and Nextdoor. There were corporate issues with Facebook and Instagram which meant they could not be used locally but the Met media and comms team were exploring all options available to them. Councillors suggested that police / local authority communications could potentially be considered as a future review topic (this would fall within the responsibility of the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee).

Members sought clarification as to how residents could be reassured that lesser crimes such as ASB and shoplifting were being taken seriously. It was confirmed that officers would be encouraged to be consistently present on their wards to address these issues. The ASB team in Hillingdon Council had recently been restructured and would be localities-based once fully launched. The team would work on more persistent problems and the street enforcement team, environmental protection team and out of hours teams would continue to operate. There was a commitment to have localities teams managers on ward panels.

The Committee commented that residents were sometimes unwilling to report ASB issues as they did not know where to go and felt nothing would be done. The Police noted that it was important to raise understanding of the role of officers and to better inform people when to call the Police. There was a need to engage better with residents and build up ward panels. Increased visibility was also key and officers needed to be valued and appropriately trained. The New Met London Plan aimed to encourage people to report crime and be reassured that something would be done about it.

Members requested a heat map indicating where different crimes were more prevalent in the Borough and requested more information regarding the 'dip sample' mentioned on page 22 of the agenda pack. It was confirmed that this related to stop and search – a record would be selected at random and thoroughly checked to ensure stop and search was being conducted appropriately. The checks would also involve body-worn footage.

Councillors sought clarity regarding reaction times noting that a recently reported cannabis farm had not been inspected for 17 days by which time it had been cleared. It was confirmed that there was no set reaction time. Such cases required planning;

resources had to be gathered and risk assessments completed which took some time.

With regard to engaging with young people and minority ethnic groups, Supt Bennett confirmed that this was a challenge. Work was being undertaken with young people in colleges. The Police worked with the Sahara Sisters and had a good link with faith leads across the Borough. A Race Action Plan was included in the new Met for London Plan.

Councillor Gardner expressed her gratitude to the Police for supporting her with her work on domestic abuse and VAWG. It was important to engage with these women to build trust.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the content of the report and asked questions in order to clarify matters of concern or interest in the Borough.

19.

2024/25 BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF THE RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE (*Agenda Item 6*)

Andy Goodwin, Head of Strategic Finance and Ceri Lamoureux, Head of Finance for Place presented the budget report which provided the Select Committee with an update on the current challenges and the work underway to prepare for the consultation budget to be presented to December Cabinet. A further update would be provided in January 2024. The feedback from the Committee would then be included in the budget report to be presented to Cabinet in February 2024.

Members were informed that, for 2023-24, the Council was reporting a net underspend of £23k. The services within the remit of the Residents' Services Select Committee were forecast to overspend by £1,778k with this being driven by three key issues:

1. the Green Spaces savings being impacted by external factors such as inflation;
2. Community safety and Enforcement due to the impacts of Heathrow and Brexit-related pressures; and
3. income pressures within the planning service.

Within these services there were £12.5m pounds worth of savings to be delivered in 23-24 with £1,83k of this recorded as red. £600k related to fees and charges predominantly linked to parking, £200k was linked to better targeting the demand for recycling sacks, £241k within Green Spaces and £42k for street cleansing. The HRA was currently forecast to break even.

With regards to the MTF, in February 2023, the Council savings requirement was estimated to be £55,414k with the single largest factor being driven by exceptional inflation adding £60m to the budget gap within the remit of the Residents' Services Select Committee. There were no exceptional inflation items with a total requirement within the remit of the Select Committee accounting for £7.1m of the £60m requirements, with the forecast pay award making up £4.7m of this and the remaining £2.4m being driven by the inflation requirement on contracted expenditure.

Service pressures were forecast to add £23m predominantly from the impact of demographic growth within waste services (£2.9m) and homelessness (£2.1m). Corporate items added just under £12m with £6.5m of this being driven by the Council's borrowing requirement to fund the capital program and £4.1m from the TFL

	<p>concessionary Affairs Levy. It was confirmed that, over the next few months in the build up to December Cabinet, officers would continue to work on assessing the budget gap with inflation remaining high and the pressures on Council Services linked to the cost-of-living crisis. They would also explore ways to reduce the Council's expenditure by driving efficiency gains whilst protecting frontline services and using the Council's transformation process to formulate the budget proposals that would be presented back to the Committee in January.</p> <p>Members enquired why Green Spaces was isolated in respect of inflationary pressures. It was confirmed that inflation was not particularly impacting that service area, but had had a more significant impact because of the reducing envelope.</p> <p>In respect of external consultants, Members enquired whether these were used to supplement existing staff. It was confirmed that, within the planning service there were niche specialist areas for which external consultants were used from time to time. The Committee was informed that there had been a slowdown in the construction area which had had a knock-on effect on planning income.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the budget planning report for services within the remit of the Residents' Services Select Committee be noted.</p>
20.	<p>DRAFT FINAL REPORT: A REVIEW OF ALLEY GATING IN HILLINGDON (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the draft final Alley Gating in Hillingdon review report be agreed.</p>
21.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the forward plan be noted.</p>
22.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>Democratic Services presented the following potential information items as suggested by the Chairman for inclusion in the Work Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graffiti removal • Sheltered housing • Tree planting • Food waste • Street Champions • Animal welfare • ASBET • Sports – facilities, engagement & inclusivity

	<p>In relation to the last item, it was suggested that this could focus on facilities for women and disability access. It could also consider how the Council assisted clubs in procuring funds. Members suggested that women-only swimming sessions would be beneficial.</p> <p>The suggested items would be added to the work programme - further ideas would be welcomed.</p> <p>In respect of the Locata item scheduled for the October meeting, it was confirmed that Members wished to see the system in action if possible as this would help them to assist and support their residents.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.17 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer on epenny@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, officers, the press and members of the public.