

Review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey: Witness Session 3

Committee name	Residents' Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Melissa Blower, Housing Project Manager
Papers with report	Scoping Report

HEADLINES

This item will encompass the third witness session regarding the Committee's review into Homelessness and the Customer Journey in Hillingdon.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Residents' Services Select Committee notes the evidence heard at the witness session and seeks clarification as necessary in the context of its review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey in Hillingdon.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Residents' Services Select Committee agreed to undertake a major review of the Council's Housing Advice and Homelessness Service, with a particular focus on the residents' journey through the system and customer service. The scoping report for the review was subsequently approved at the Select Committee meeting on 13 February 2024.

At this third witness session, representatives of key partners; namely Thames Reach - Sophie Murray, P3 - Zara Sweet, Laura Lawson, Nicola Tallon and Hillingdon Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service (HDAAS) – Sonia Stewart will be in attendance to outline their roles and answer any questions that may arise.

Thames Reach – Sophie Murray

Thames Reach is an organisation that works directly with those that are rough sleeping within London or in hostel accommodation and is committed to preventing vulnerable people from becoming homeless.

Thames Reach provides a Rapid Response Team that is funded by the Greater London Authority to provide an emergency response to those that are rough sleeping across London. The team delivers shifts every night of the year and early mornings, to look for people who are sleeping rough. The team's primary aim is to respond to referrals from Street link and refer clients who are new to the street to prevent them from spending a second night on the streets.

The team's target is to conduct a first visit to a sleeping site within 24 hours of a referral being received and then support those who are rough sleeping into accommodation pathways or agencies.

P3 - Zara Sweet, Laura Lawson, Nicola Tallon

P3 is a charity and a social enterprise who run a variety of services across the UK with the aim to give everyone the chance to be part of the community they live in and feel connected to society. P3 think that everyone is unique, and that with support and confidence they can unlock their inner potential to open up a world of possibilities.

Within Hillingdon, P3 support families with children under 5 for advice and young people under the age of 25. P3 provide advice and support for those under 25 with support with wellbeing, accessing specialist services, dealing with debt, access to education and employment, support to tackle drug or alcohol misuse and mediation with family, friends or partners.

Hillingdon Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service (HDAAS) - Sonia Stewart

HDAAS is an independent and confidential service that works with agencies (such as the police, housing and social care) to offer an independent and confidential service for male and female victims of domestic abuse. HDAAS offers support for all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of the level of risk (IDVA and floating support). The service works to reduce the risk and repeat victimisation, co-ordinates services for individuals to ensure safe outcomes, offers comprehensive risk assessments and safety plans for adults aged 16+ and their children and provides advice, training and consultancy to partners.

Site Visits

As part of the review, on Wednesday 22 May 2024, four Members of the Select Committee visited B&Bs in the Borough accompanied by the Counter Fraud Team. On Friday 24 / 31 May 2024 some Members also visited the customer contact centre and the Housing Reception at the Civic Centre to listen to calls and observe proceedings.

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference were noted for this review, subject to any changes agreed by the Committee:

1. To gain a thorough understanding of the Council's Homeless Prevention Service and the resident's journey through this process.
2. To scrutinise the service delivery and review its effectiveness.
3. To review service users' feedback to explore the challenges faced by residents accessing the service.
4. To look at other local authorities that may have different models of service delivery for best practice, including research and findings from charities, housing bodies, regional bodies and organisations, e.g. GLA.
5. Subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose practical and deliverable actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Select Committees directly engage residents in shaping policy and recommendations from the Committees are presented to Cabinet to consider, and ultimately seek to improve the way the Council provides services to residents.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.