

# Review of Homelessness and the Customer Journey: Update from Council Officers on Improvement Activity

<b>Committee name</b>	Residents' Services Select Committee
<b>Officer reporting</b>	Melissa Blower
<b>Papers with report</b>	Residents' Services Select Committee – Project Neptune Presentation
<b>Ward</b>	All

## HEADLINES

In line with the approved Council Plan 2022-2026, Hillingdon Council is continuing to review and modernise services to improve the customer experience for residents. During 2023, in response to rising levels of homelessness presentations, an improvement programme commenced to review the current homelessness and housing advice services, including reviewing the end-to-end processes on casework management. Following on from this review a series of recommendations were made that have formed a change management programme known internally as Project Neptune.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Committee review and note the ongoing improvement works and the improvement this will have on the resident experience when approaching for housing advice and support.**

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Background

The project is now in the second phase which focuses on 8 key areas of improvement:

- Strategies and Policies
- Workforce Planning
- Supervision, Support & Performance
- Customer Journey
- Customer Care and Case Management Standards
- External Partners and Communications
- Housing Commissioning Plan
- Data, Technology and Business Intelligence

Since the project began in 2023 there have been several changes delivered within the service and work remains ongoing to continue to deliver service improvements.

Key successes from the programme to date include:

- Reduced the number of homeless families placed into high-cost temporary accommodation since April 2024.
- No homeless families currently placed in commercial hotels.
- Delivery of 300 additional social rented council homes on track during 2024/25.
- Options to increase access to private rented sector accommodation are being reviewed.
- Review of Social Housing Allocation Policy completed and proposals to be presented to July Cabinet to seek approval to commence consultation. The proposed changes will make it easier for residents to understand how applications are prioritised.
- Introduced a dedicated homeless prevention triage team to ensure needs are effectively assessed and residents are given clear advice about their housing options.
- Changes have been made and further work is underway to review the information available to residents to ensure that the Council website offers support for those looking for advice, whilst also ensuring that the Council is setting expectations from the first point of contact about the type of support on offer.
- We have also developed a fresh training offer for staff new into the service and have been delivering a programme of development for our existing staff to ensure officers have the relevant skills and knowledge to support our residents in need of housing advice. This includes launching a new performance management and case work review model to support case workers – currently being piloted with staff.
- Work also continues to review our ICT systems to reduce the administrative burden on staff to create further capacity for officers to support residents with their housing situations. A new homelessness case work system went live in April 2024 as part of this programme.

## **Executive Responsibilities**

The portfolio Cabinet Member responsible is Councillor Eddie Lavery.

## **RESIDENT BENEFIT**

The review will examine the resident's journey through the homelessness pathway and will make recommendations on how the service can be improved to better meet the needs of residents at risk of homelessness.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None at this stage.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None at this stage.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil.