

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

12 June 2025



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

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chair), Darran Davies, Ekta Gohil, Scott Farley (Opposition Lead), Janet Gardner, Kamal Preet Kaur and Kaushik Banerjee</p> <p>Officers Present: Matt Davis (Director – Strategic and Operational Finance) Julia Johnson (Director of Planning and Sustainable Growth) Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director of Central Services) Freddie Mohammed (Parking Representations and Appeals Manager) Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer) Richard Webb (Director Community Safety & Enforcement)</p> <p>Others Present: Becky Coffin (Director of Communities and Sustainability, Heathrow) Danielle Knafo (Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Heathrow)</p>
82.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE with Councillor Kaushik Banerjee substituting.</p>
83.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
84.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS DATED 22 APRIL 2025 AND 8 MAY 2025 (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings dated 22 April 2025 and 8 May 2025 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
85.	<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>
86.	<p>HEATHROW INFORMATION REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Becky Coffin (Director of Communities and Sustainability, Heathrow) and Danielle Knafo (Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Heathrow) were in attendance to present their report and respond to Members' questions. Key points included:</p>

- Heathrow's pride in being part of the Hillingdon community and the strengthening partnership with the Council in recent years were highlighted.
- Three key areas of collaboration were focussed on: local partnership working, economic growth, and local impact.

Local Partnership Working

- It was noted that Heathrow had prioritised several initiatives over the past three years, notably addressing local parking concerns.
- A Local Parking Action Plan had been established, managed through a multi-stakeholder forum under the Heathrow Area Transport Group, with input from Hillingdon and other boroughs.
- Efforts included:
 - Tackling meet-and-greet and nuisance parking by private hire vehicles.
 - Collaborating with the British Parking Association to approve operators.
 - Enhancing the Authorised Vehicle Area for safer waiting zones.
 - Supporting Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) and Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs), with enforcement aided by police funding, particularly benefiting Heathrow Villages.
- Members heard that the Community Investment Partnership had been launched over two years previously with the Council, London Wildlife Trust, and British Airways.
 - This initiative supported local nature reserves such as Minet and Cranford Country Parks, and Yeading Meadows.
 - It also facilitated conservation work and volunteer opportunities.
- It was noted that Heathrow had sponsored the recent "Picnic in the Park" at Barra Hall Park, where over 750 plants had been distributed to local families by the Heathrow Rangers.

Role in Local Economic Growth

- It was confirmed that, in December of the previous year, Heathrow had announced a £2.3 billion infrastructure investment, focusing on:
 - Terminal upgrades.
 - Enhancing customer experience and punctuality.
 - Improving local transport and sustainable travel connections.
- The Heathrow Local Growth Task Force had been established, involving Borough stakeholders, chambers of commerce, and business groups.
 - Workstreams included employment and skills, supply chain development, sustainable transport, and green growth.

- It was noted that Heathrow had participated in the “Hillingdon Takes Off” event in February.
 - The event showcased strong interest from investors and businesses in West London’s economic potential.

Addressing Local Impact

- The challenges of having an airport in the Borough were recognised and Heathrow’s commitment to listening and responding to community concerns was emphasised.
- On sustainable travel:
 - It was noted that Heathrow promoted active travel routes through its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
 - Collaborations including the Harlington High Street route, and the Hillingdon Cycle Strategy were highlighted.
- On air quality:
 - Data from Heathrow Airwatch showed a 35–39% reduction in pollutants over the past decade, with all monitoring stations, including Hillingdon’s, within regulatory limits.
 - Plans were underway for Clean Air Day, including a pilot workshop at Harlington School.
- On noise:
 - The Committee was informed that a new noise insulation programme had been launched, offering up to 100% funding for eligible homes.
 - In Longford, 304 of 454 eligible homes had registered, and 209 installations had been completed to date.
 - Additional support included insulation for schools, vortex protection, and relocation assistance, all aligned with Heathrow’s Noise Action Plan.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding the recent power outage at Heathrow, it was recognised that it had been a difficult day for both the Borough and the airport, during which the airport had been closed due to a fire at the North Hyde substation. It was noted that the decision to close had been made to prioritise the safety of passengers and staff, and an apology was extended for the disruption caused. The successful recovery of operations was attributed to the efforts of the airport’s many partners.

Members heard that the Kelly Review, conducted independently by non-executive director Ruth Kelly, had recently been published. This review examined the airport’s preparedness and response to the incident. It concluded that the decisions made on the day had been appropriate and that safety had been effectively prioritised, with no injuries reported. It was noted that energy resilience remained a key part of the airport’s

strategy, and that the response had been effective due to established crisis procedures.

The Committee was informed that the Kelly Review included around 20 recommendations aimed at strengthening future resilience. The airport team committed to implementing all of them and offered to share the published findings. It was acknowledged that some questions remained unanswered at the national level, particularly regarding the cause of the fire and the failure of all three transformers, with a final report expected later in the year.

Members sought further clarification regarding the impact of the Cranford Park Agreement. In response, the Director of Communities and Sustainability at Heathrow confirmed that the changes being referred to were related to the former Cranford Agreement, a government policy that had been dissolved approximately thirteen years earlier. Planning permission had been submitted to make ground infrastructure changes that would allow for runway alternation, enabling take-offs and landings in both directions on both runways. As part of this application to the Council, noise and air quality assessments and modelling had been carried out to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed changes. It was noted that mitigation measures had been proposed, including noise insulation for homes affected by new or increased noise levels. These proposals were under review by the Council's planning team. The Committee heard that an existing network of air quality monitors was already in place in the area, which would provide relevant data to support ongoing assessments.

Councillors raised concerns about ongoing parking issues in the nearby area of Packet Boat Lane noting that increased parking charges had led to a rise in unregulated parking on private land in that area, with hundreds of cars being parked near a popular lake. Members enquired whether there was a way for Councillors to directly report such issues and for residents to engage with Heathrow on these matters.

In response, it was explained that Heathrow had set up a reporting portal the previous year. This portal allowed residents from any location to report nuisance parking believed to be linked to the airport. Reports submitted through the portal were reviewed by the service access team, who used the data to identify problem areas and coordinate responses with the Council and local police, including a dedicated officer. It was confirmed that a Community Relations Helpline was available via email or phone during working hours, for reporting broader issues not limited to parking. **It was agreed that these contact options would be relayed to Members to be shared with residents.**

Councillors expressed concern about the burden placed on the Council's parking officers due to airport-related parking issues, particularly vehicles left for extended periods. They asked what Heathrow was doing beyond working with the police to support the Council and requested an example of a successful intervention.

In response, the Heathrow representatives acknowledged the issue and explained that they had funded enforcement in Hillingdon and other boroughs. They described efforts to address private hire vehicle parking through direct engagement, improvements to authorised vehicle areas, and communication with licensing authorities. The most effective measure cited was the implementation of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs), which had led to over 1,000 drivers being moved on, with few repeat offenders. Illegal parking operations were being addressed through collaboration with the Council and police, and public messaging discouraged the use of unapproved

parking providers.

Members raised concerns about the smell and taste of aviation fuel in residential areas and asked whether anything could be done to prevent this. It was clarified that air quality monitoring showed aircraft emissions had minimal reach and that most pollution detected came from road traffic. It was explained that airspace modernisation, a government-led programme, would reduce aircraft stacking and associated emissions.

In response to a further question from the Committee regarding a bird hide facility and why it had not been advertised, given its potential value for school visits, it was noted that the facility had only recently opened. The Heathrow representatives committed to following up on opportunities for school engagement. They also mentioned other biodiversity sites and existing partnerships with local schools, offering to explore further outreach.

Members returned to the issue of unauthorised mass car parks and asked whether Heathrow had discussed funding support for residents affected by new parking permit charges. The Heathrow representatives stated that they were open to such discussions and emphasised their focus on addressing the root causes of the problem. They encouraged residents to report issues via the portal to ensure data-driven responses.

In response to further questions from the Committee, it was confirmed that noise monitoring extended under flight paths, and that new ground noise monitoring was being introduced in response to community feedback.

Councillors enquired whether the partnership between Heathrow and the Council had reached its full potential and what could be improved. The Heathrow representatives acknowledged progress but noted that parking remained a challenge. They highlighted community investment initiatives and encouraged Councillors to promote funding opportunities. They also discussed the Heathrow Skills and Employment Academy and the importance of making job opportunities more accessible to residents.

In response to questions about Heathrow's zero waste objective and how much waste was recycled, the Committee heard that approximately 49% of waste was currently recycled, with a goal to increase this to 60–70% over the next 5–10 years. It was explained that construction and commercial waste were largely recyclable, but onboard catering waste had to be incinerated due to international regulations.

Councillors enquired about Heathrow's business rates and whether the airport would be open to discussions with senior officers to ensure fair contributions. In response, it was confirmed that Heathrow was the largest business rates payer in the country. The Council's Director of Strategic and Operational Finance clarified that valuations were set by the Valuation Office Agency, not the Council.

Members sought further clarification regarding Heathrow's response to the Government's recent announcement supporting a third runway. It was confirmed that a proposal was being prepared for submission by summer, reviewing previously paused plans, and considering necessary policy changes to meet the Government's timeline.

Returning to parking, Councillor asked whether Heathrow would be willing to fund enforcement efforts more fairly, given the increasing burden on the Council. The Heathrow representatives were disappointed their efforts were not fully recognised and reiterated their commitment to enforcement and collaboration. They confirmed

	<p>openness to further discussions and additional measures. The Director of Community Safety and Enforcement added that Heathrow had already funded additional enforcement deployments and that recent meetings had resulted in further funding commitments.</p> <p>With regard to apprenticeship capacity and work experience opportunities at Heathrow, the Committee was informed that multiple apprenticeship schemes were in place, with 31 Hillingdon residents currently supported. It was noted that Heathrow had also reported delivering 371 work experience days to 429 young people in the first quarter of the year. Opportunities to expand this further would be explored.</p> <p>Members asked whether Heathrow provided winter support, such as gritting local roads. It was confirmed that this possibility would be further explored; however, it was noted that Heathrow's equipment was specialised for airport use.</p> <p>A further question from the Committee focused on active travel and sustainable transport. The Heathrow representatives explained that their Local Cycling and Walking Action Plan aimed to connect airport routes with Borough networks. They discussed the Sustainable Travel Zone, which subsidised bus routes for shift workers, and invited feedback on areas needing improved access.</p> <p>The session concluded with a request from the Chair for Heathrow to consider supporting canal and towpath improvements, which the representative agreed to take back to their team. The chair thanked the Heathrow team for their attendance and engagement.</p> <p>That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the information provided in the Heathrow Information Report.</p>
87.	<p>DRAFT PARKING ANNUAL REPORT (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Richard Webb (Director of Community Safety and Enforcement) and Freddie Mohammed (Parking Representations and Appeals Manager) were in attendance to respond to Members' queries in relation to the Draft Parking Annual Report.</p> <p>Councillors sought to determine the percentage of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) that had been paid upfront and how many had proceeded to the collection stage. The response from officers indicated that the information was not immediately available but could be retrieved from the processing system and would be provided to the Committee after the meeting.</p> <p>Members enquired whether road signs associated with moving traffic restrictions, such as waiting restrictions and entry prohibitions, were sufficiently visible, appropriately sized, and suitable for public comprehension. It was confirmed that parking enforcement was heavily legislated, and that signage complied with the Traffic Signs and General Directions regulations, ensuring uniformity across England and Wales.</p> <p>A subsequent question from the Committee raised concerns about the misuse of disabled parking bays and the abuse faced by both legitimate blue badge holders and enforcement officers. Councillors questioned the frequency of visits to areas where such abuse occurred and whether there were sufficient staff to manage these issues. In response, it was explained that staffing and deployment were continually reviewed in collaboration with the contractor, and that a vehicle equipped with ANPR had been</p>

acquired to improve coverage. It was also noted that specific operations targeting blue badge fraud were conducted throughout the year.

Officers acknowledged the difficulty in enforcement due to invisible disabilities and explained that civil enforcement officers were limited in their authority, being able only to inspect badges. Members were informed that fraud investigations and prosecutions were handled by a dedicated team in collaboration with enforcement officers.

Members offered to provide a list of locations where blue badge misuse was prevalent and noted that they had never been asked to show their own badges, suggesting a lack of enforcement visibility.

Councillors asked whether PCNs could be broken down by those that had proceeded to court or entered debt recovery. They also queried how the Council monitored the deployment of enforcement officers to ensure they were present during peak times and that resources were used effectively. The response provided an overview of the enforcement process, from initial challenge to adjudication and potential court involvement. It was confirmed that data on PCNs was tracked by the finance team and that deployment was monitored through a tracking system, monthly meetings, and a hotline that allowed for rapid response to reported issues.

Members raised concerns regarding a recent visit during which parking enforcement officers had been observed being assaulted, including having their handheld device taken. Councillors questioned why, after a “code red” alert had been issued, the officer had received a phone call asking whether police assistance was needed, rather than immediate action being taken. Concerns were expressed that the control room was not actively monitoring the situation despite the presence of 3,000 live cameras in the Borough. Members further questioned why the contractor staff were not based in the control room and emphasised the vulnerability of officers, suggesting that the current system did not adequately protect them. Councillors felt a review of officer protection was essential.

Officers acknowledged the seriousness of the incident and confirmed that footage had been reviewed. It was explained that a “code red” alert triggered a response from nearby Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), who arrived quickly. The benefit of multiple body-worn cameras was noted, and it was stated that such incidents were reviewed monthly and reported to the police when appropriate. It was also noted that prosecutions had occurred in some cases, depending on the evidence and the willingness of the CEO to proceed.

Members reiterated that although three officers had been present, the assaulted officer had been alone at the time of the incident. The Committee questioned why the contractor had not been integrated into the control room and suggested that even a radio link could allow the control room to activate nearby cameras in response to a code red. Councillors stressed that response times of even three minutes could be too long in such situations. **Officers acknowledged the concern and committed to investigating the feasibility of integration with the control room.**

Councillors raised further questions about the hotline used to report illegally parked vehicles. They asked whether Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were in place for the hotline, noting that residents had experienced long wait times and inconsistent responses. The Committee questioned whether the hotline’s performance was being monitored and whether improvements were needed.

In response, it was confirmed that KPIs existed for the hotline, including call volumes and response times. However, it was clarified that the hotline did not operate with full call centre functionality, and therefore metrics such as dropped or missed calls were not available. The hotline was staffed by a single person, which could lead to delays during busy periods. It was confirmed that the hotline was managed by the contractor under the terms of the parking contract.

In reply to requests for further clarification, it was confirmed that PCNs were issued based on contraventions rather than location, therefore the system did not automatically categorise them by zone or ward. **However, it was possible to extract that data through additional processing.**

Members enquired whether the current level of enforcement was sufficient, citing a neighbouring borough that had issued more than twice as many PCNs.

The response stated that comparing headline figures between boroughs was not straightforward due to differences in policy, geography, and enforcement practices. It was emphasised that the Council aimed to achieve compliance rather than maximise PCN issuance. Factors such as the number of restrictions, use of cameras, and policy decisions (e.g., leniency for first-time offenders with blue badges) all influenced the figures. It was noted that the Council's approach prioritised fairness and customer service, including discretionary cancellations for certain groups.

The Committee Members commented on the lack of comparative data in the report, stating that the figures presented did not allow for meaningful year-on-year analysis. They asked what was being done to address the issue of "ghost plates" and other methods used to obscure vehicle registration.

The response clarified that ghost plates were more commonly associated with speeding offences rather than parking violations. It was explained that if a vehicle was reported as cloned, the Council required a crime reference number from the police prior to cancelling the PCN. While such cases were not extremely common, they had been increasing. It was noted that enforcement officers had not reported encountering ghost plates with stickers, and that such tactics were more often used to evade speed cameras.

Councillors sought further clarification as to what procedures were in place for dealing with parking infringements that occurred outside of the contracted enforcement hours, which ended at 10:00pm. The response confirmed that there was no enforcement service outside of those hours, but that if a significant number of complaints were received, the situation would be reviewed.

Councillors noted that some questions raised in previous meetings had not received responses and that requests for trend data and safety-related issues had been previously submitted but were not reflected in the current report.

Officers acknowledged the omission and explained that the parking annual report was governed by legislative requirements but could be expanded to include additional data if requested. **It was confirmed that trend data would be included in future reports.**

Councillors asked whether financial compensation was sought from third-party contractors when parking bays were suspended due to prolonged roadworks or other

	<p>disruptions. It was clarified that, while no penalty fees were charged for overruns, contractors were charged a daily rate for each day of suspension, which generated income for the Council.</p> <p>Further concerns were raised about the tracking of enforcement officers and Members enquired whether tracking could be applied to the officers themselves rather than just the devices. It was explained that the handheld devices were linked to a geolocation system which allowed tracking of the device's location. Officers were not permitted to leave their devices unattended, and any breach of this protocol would trigger a disciplinary investigation.</p> <p>In response to further questions from the Committee, it was noted that the accuracy of the tracking system was not known but could be investigated. Regarding the effectiveness of the parking enforcement strategy, it was stated that despite increased enforcement efforts and a higher number of PCNs issued, contravention rates had not declined.</p> <p>Noting that although there were 3,000 CCTV cameras in the Borough, these were not monitored 24/7, Councillors suggested a review of the staffing and operational hours of the control room. It was confirmed that the control room did not have sufficient staff to maintain continuous monitoring.</p> <p>Councillors asked whether enforcement officers had the authority to take action against vehicles that were legally parked but causing damage to roads or pavements, particularly in light of increased development and heavy vehicle use. It was confirmed that since 1974, parking on pavements or verges had been prohibited unless explicitly permitted by the Council. Officers could issue PCNs for such violations, and a specific contravention code existed for larger vehicles. Officers added that cloned vehicle cases were handled by requiring a crime reference number from the police before cancelling the PCN. It was confirmed that, as set out on page 32 of the report, over 11,000 PCNs had been issued for vehicles parked on footpaths or areas other than the carriageway.</p> <p>That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the contents of the draft annual parking report and commented on matters requiring clarification or for consideration of inclusion in the report.</p>
88.	<p>TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION - UXBRIDGE AND HAYES TOWN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Julia Johnson, Director of Planning and Sustainable Growth, was in attendance to respond to clarification questions from Members regarding the Town Centre Regeneration report.</p> <p>Members enquired how the recent announcement that no UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) would be allocated to London boroughs post-2026 would affect the current regeneration schemes. They queried whether the schemes were fully costed or if additional funding had been anticipated. In response, officers confirmed that the announcement had been unexpected and that the current programme was based solely on the funding received for the present year. It was stated that all allocated funds were required to be spent within the year, and the team was already exploring future funding options to continue the work, given its early positive impact.</p> <p>Councillors asked whether local Safer Neighbourhood Teams or anti-social behaviour</p>

teams had been involved in the design of the regeneration schemes, particularly regarding night-time safety features such as lighting and open spaces. In reply, it was acknowledged that, while the Safe Communities Team had been engaged, there had not yet been direct involvement from police officers. **The officer committed to following up on this.**

The Committee raised concerns about unmet promises in previous developments, such as the absence of a cinema and health centre in the Old Vinyl Factory and High Point Village. Members requested that local Councillors be consulted in future planning processes and highlighted ongoing issues such as a non-functioning clock and persistent rough sleeping in the subway. They also advocated for the promotion of local heritage, including Fairy Corner. The officer acknowledged the shortcomings of past developments and stated that lessons had been learned. It was explained that future schemes would ensure community benefits were delivered before residents moved in. Specific actions included assigning an officer to be on-site weekly, forming a landlord liaison group, and hosting open days to attract potential occupiers. **The Director of Planning and Sustainable Growth agreed to follow up on the clock and subway issues and expressed support for celebrating local history through regeneration efforts.**

Members asked what incentives and support schemes were in place to retain businesses and attract new enterprises to Hayes, noting the proliferation of similar shops and the loss of major retailers. It was explained that the Council had limited control over shop types due to planning regulations. However, efforts were being made to attract creative and startup businesses, particularly those priced out of East London. It was noted that the Council was also considering expanding the town centre boundary to include areas like the Old Vinyl Factory, which would allow greater influence over ground floor uses.

Councillors asked how the success of regeneration efforts was being measured, particularly in the Owen Road and Austin Road estates. They also requested that construction hoardings be made more visually appealing. The response stated that Phase 1 of the estate redevelopment was nearing completion and that a housing regeneration officer was working on-site to monitor social value outcomes. Improvements to canal links and affordable housing provisions were also highlighted. **The officer agreed to follow up on the appearance of the hoardings.**

Members raised concerns about parking provisions in new developments, particularly in light of aggressive housing targets and limited public transport options. They asked what measures were being taken to prevent overflow parking in residential streets. The response explained that parking levels were determined by the London Plan and based on public transport accessibility. In areas like Hayes and Uxbridge, which had high accessibility, car-free developments were encouraged. However, the Council could collect funds to support future parking schemes if needed.

In response to Councillors' requests for clarification regarding parking assessments in areas surrounding regeneration sites, it was indicated that parking data was collected during the planning application process and that post-occupancy surveys could be considered if specific concerns were raised.

It was confirmed that there was a growing emphasis on aligning planning with public health outcomes. Examples included proposals for leisure facilities and community kitchens, as well as ongoing collaboration with public health colleagues.

	<p>Councillors suggested exploring European models of regeneration, such as subsidised repair factories that promoted reuse and community engagement. It was confirmed that officers were open to such ideas and that similar creative initiatives were already being explored.</p> <p>Members asked whether residents displaced from the Austin Road site had the right to return and whether parking needs had been adequately considered. In response, it was confirmed that returning residents would be accommodated and that parking provisions had been balanced against other planning priorities. It was noted that additional tools outside the planning system could be used if parking became problematic.</p> <p>The Committee advocated for the establishment of a community centre in one of the new developments to serve diverse local communities. Members also questioned why Section 106 funds were not always spent in the areas directly impacted by development. It was explained that a community space was still expected as part of the cinema building in the Old Vinyl Factory and that discussions with the landowner were ongoing. Regarding Section 106 funds, it was clarified that some contributions were site-specific, while others, such as those for carbon offsetting or air quality, could be used more flexibly across the Borough depending on the nature of the mitigation required.</p> <p>That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted and commented on the programme of work outlined in the report.</p>
89.	<p>UPDATE FURTHER TO THE COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF THE EMPTY HOMES COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Matt Davis, Director of Strategic and Operational Finance, was in attendance to respond to Members' questions in relation to the report.</p> <p>Members sought further clarification regarding ambiguity in the report, noting that it appeared to simultaneously state that the scheme was not always effective while also recommending its continuation. They referenced data on page 52 of the agenda pack, highlighting inconsistencies in the number of accounts charged a premium and questioning the scheme's effectiveness in bringing properties back into use.</p> <p>The Director of Strategic and Operational Finance responded by explaining that the report did not quantify how many more homes would have remained empty without the scheme, as such data did not exist. The scheme, introduced in 2013, aimed to encourage occupancy of otherwise vacant homes. It was acknowledged that the report's wording could have been clearer, and it was noted that many councils had adopted similar schemes for the same purpose.</p> <p>Councillors raised concerns about the clarity of the report's language, particularly regarding second homes and the application of a premium. They cited a section indicating plans to contact second homeowners by December 2025 and questioned the clarity and timing of the policy's implementation.</p> <p>In response, it was clarified that the referenced paragraph pertained to second homes, not empty homes. It was confirmed that the Council had not yet introduced the second homes premium discussed in February 2024. A legal notice had been published to announce a consultation on the scheme's introduction from April 2026. The Council</p>

	<p>planned to consult registered second homeowners before September to confirm their status, as some may no longer be using the properties as second homes. It was reiterated that the matter would be included in the December budget-setting process and it was acknowledged that the report was somewhat unclear.</p> <p>In reply to further questions from the Committee, it was explained that the Council pursued all reasonable means to collect debt, including court recovery, and wrote off debts only in cases such as untraceable individuals, bereavement, or bankruptcy.</p> <p>Members suggested that liability orders added weight to enforcement and helped recover costs. In reply, the Director of Strategic and Operational Finance confirmed that the associated costs were chargeable to the ratepayer if payment was not made by the due date.</p> <p>Councillors asked whether the Council had considered combining the premium with compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers to prompt quicker engagement from property owners. The Director of Strategic and Operational Finance agreed to investigate this proposal further after the meeting.</p> <p>In response to their requests for further clarification, Members heard that the proposal remained under consultation and would be evaluated as part of the December budget process. A business case would be prepared, assessing demographics and financial viability. The Council might proceed even if the scheme incurred modest costs, provided it yielded environmental or housing benefits.</p> <p>Members enquired whether the Council also sought to recover costs incurred from clearing overgrown properties. It was clarified that the current discussion focused solely on Council tax recovery.</p> <p>Members wondered whether the Council could sell debt, as private companies do, to recover costs. In reply, it was noted that officers had recently discussed this option, known as factoring. Members heard that, while it could provide immediate income, private companies might not act with the same social responsibility. The Council would consider all options during the budget-setting process to maximise benefits.</p> <p>It was noted that the scheme's primary goal was behavioural change and reducing the need for temporary accommodation, rather than revenue generation.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee:</p> <p>1. Noted the proposed next steps to increase the empty property premium to the maximum allowed and introduce the second home premium from 01/04/2026; and</p> <p>2. Commented on the information within the report and provided feedback to Cabinet where necessary.</p>
90.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
91.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members requested a mini review or information item on the topic of Breakspear</p>

	<p>Crematorium.</p> <p>A summer site visit to Ruislip Lido was suggested.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.25 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.

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