

Minutes

RESIDENTS' SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

10 March 2026

Meeting held at



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Peter Smallwood (Chair), Ekta Gohil (Vice-Chair), Darran Davies, Jas Dhot, Kamal Preet Kaur (Labour Lead), Elizabeth Garelick and Jagjit Singh</p> <p>Witnesses Present: Diane Faichney – Bell Farm Christian Centre Melanie Aston – Hillingdon Women’s Centre Kayci Powell – Hillingdon Women’s Centre Daniel Johnson (Borough Commander of Hillingdon – London Fire Brigade) Chief Inspector Ben Wright (Metropolitan Police Service)</p> <p>Officers Present: Matt Davis (Director – Strategic & Operational Finance) Daniel Ferrer (Licensing Team Manager) Fiona Gibbs (Stronger Communities Manager) Dave Holmes (ASB Team Leader – Response) Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director of Residents Services) Ceri Lamoureux (Head of Finance - Residents Services) Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer) Richard Webb (Director Community Safety & Enforcement)</p> <p>Others Present: Councillor Wayne Bridges – Cabinet Member for Community & Environment</p>
147.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
148.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
149.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting dated 18 February 2026 be agreed.</p>
150.	<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 as Part I and would be considered in public.</p>

151. **COMMUNITY COHESION** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Fiona Gibbs, Stronger Communities Manager, was in attendance, together with representatives of Bell Farm Christian Centre (Diane Faichney) and of Hillingdon Women's Centre (Kayci Powell and Melanie Aston).

Diane Faichney of Bell Farm Christian Centre was invited to address Members of the Select Committee. It was explained that the Centre was a charitable organisation based on the Bell Farm Estate in West Drayton, established in 2000, which had delivered a wide range of community projects over many years in response to local needs. Members were informed that the charity operated a long-standing advice centre, which had been running for approximately 25 years and was partly funded through the Hillingdon Advice Partnership (HAP). This service was delivered in partnership with Nucleus, DASH and Age UK and operated twice weekly alongside the food bank. The organisation was also a founding partner of the UB7 Foodbank, established in 2017, and worked holistically to enable referrals between services.

Members heard that additional activities included an older people's dining and social centre providing weekly freshly cooked meals, social activities, and trips, as well as children's events, summer holiday clubs and year-round family activities. Over the previous three years, the charity had also undertaken work supporting asylum seekers accommodated in local hotels.

It was reported that, over the preceding six months, the organisation had experienced harassment directed at staff and volunteers due to its work with asylum seekers. This included significant criminal damage to the premises, with windows and doors repeatedly smashed, resulting in substantial financial costs. These incidents were attributed to a small minority of individuals and had caused division and intimidation within the estate. As a result, the delivery of asylum seeker support services had been adapted and relocated away from Bell Farm, although the work itself had continued. An application for Home Office funding to improve building security had been submitted in December, but a decision was still awaited, and it was noted that existing security infrastructure was outdated and difficult to upgrade due to limited charitable resources.

Despite these challenges, it was highlighted that the organisation had recently secured funding to become a "Loved and Wanted" Centre, supported by the Mayor of London in partnership with the National Lottery. This programme focused on community building and the creation of safe community spaces across London and would contribute to enhancing existing activities at Bell Farm until March 2028. The initiative aimed to embed social mixing and cohesion programmes and was expected to reach approximately 3,000 people per year. Delivery partners, including REAP and HACS, would provide additional activities such as wellbeing courses as part of the project.

It was emphasised that this funding had been secured at a critical time of heightened community tension in West Drayton and increasing financial pressures on the voluntary sector, alongside rising demand for services that exceeded current capacity. It was expressed that the Loved and Wanted Centre would help to restore hope, strengthen community cohesion and foster togetherness over the coming years. The organisation confirmed its intention to continue working collaboratively with council officers and partners and to build on its long-standing role in reducing hardship, strengthening belonging and supporting vulnerable and newly arrived residents. Overall, the charity aimed to promote inclusion, resilience and cohesion by addressing social, cultural and economic barriers and restoring hope in the south of the Borough in a compassionate

and meaningful way.

Kayci Powell and Melanie Aston of Hillingdon Women's Centre were also in attendance and addressed the Select Committee confirming that the charity was approaching its 40th anniversary in April 2026. It was outlined that the primary focus of Hillingdon Women's Centre was to support women across the Borough, with the most prevalent needs relating to domestic abuse, poverty, destitution, isolation, loneliness and a lack of access to support and resources. It was reported that approximately 85% of women supported by the service had experienced domestic abuse, with this proportion having increased year on year. Although the organisation was not solely commissioned to deliver domestic abuse services, this area represented the most significant demand.

Members heard that the Centre's domestic abuse services were described as being delivered by a small team of specialist caseworkers who provided safety and crisis support, assisted women to access safer accommodation, worked with partner professionals, and undertook risk assessments and safety planning. Support was provided on both a short-term and long-term basis, depending on individual circumstances, and it was noted that domestic abuse cases were often complex and multifaceted. In addition, a domestic abuse recovery programme was offered to women who were no longer in abusive relationships and were living safely. This programme comprised a six-week group intervention aimed at supporting recovery, reducing the risk of re-victimisation, promoting goal setting, and reinforcing that survivors were not to blame.

It was further explained that the Centre also delivered general advice services, providing support in relation to benefits, basic housing issues and access to legal advice through referrals to solicitors, operating as a one-stop support service. The Centre was based in the same building it had occupied for 40 years and operated as a women-only safe space. It was confirmed that a range of group activities and events were delivered to promote inclusion and connection, including weekly wellbeing groups such as "Positive Energy", which focused on wellbeing activities and skills development.

Reference was also made to the Women's Hub, previously funded by the Greater London Authority, through which support had been provided to grassroots women's groups offering community connection, such as the Austin Sewing Club and the Afghan Women's Support Group. This support included assistance with basic funding needs, such as venue hire, and guidance to group leaders to help sustain their activities and fundraising efforts.

It was highlighted that demand for domestic abuse support within the Borough continued to increase and that cases were frequently complex. The Centre worked closely with the Council's Hillingdon Domestic Abuse Service (HDAS), which was identified as its largest referral partner. Strong partnership working with the Council was maintained through operational groups and contractual arrangements with the local authority.

Councillors sought clarification as to how effectively the Council was supporting these organisations, given the complexity and multi-agency nature of their services, and where the Council could improve its contribution.

In response, Diane Faichney of Bell Farm Christian Centre explained that experiences varied across individual projects but identified ongoing difficulties in contacting Council

officers by telephone, particularly in relation to housing and benefits matters. She stated that significant time was often spent attempting to reach officers, sometimes for several hours, which diverted resources away from supporting clients who were waiting to be seen. It was noted that this issue had existed for several years and was exacerbated by staff turnover, redundancies and retirements, which made it harder to maintain established relationships with officers. Ms Faichney suggested that the provision of more direct contact numbers for advice services, including those working under the Hillingdon Advice Partnership (HAP), would enable issues to be resolved more efficiently. It was acknowledged that the Council could not resolve all cases, particularly given the scale of homelessness pressures locally and nationally, but it was emphasised that advice services could assist by signposting clients to appropriate contacts if communication with officers was improved.

Melanie Aston of Hillingdon Women's Centre stated that her organisation shared similar concerns. She explained that one approach which had worked well at the Women's Centre was the attendance of a Council housing officer at a weekly housing drop-in specifically for domestic abuse survivors. This arrangement had made it easier to navigate housing challenges and prioritise cases. It was highlighted that navigating the housing system could be particularly difficult for survivors of domestic abuse, noting that issues such as perceptions of intentional homelessness and other survivor-specific barriers could place women at increased risk and potentially force them to return to perpetrators.

Members asked Hillingdon Women's Centre whether it provided domestic violence funding to assist women who had left abusive situations, specifically asking whether the organisation could help with rebuilding a home or providing essential items such as furniture. In response, it was confirmed that the Centre did not have direct funding for this purpose. It was explained that the organisation was exploring the possibility of securing hardship funding in the future but that such funding was difficult to obtain. In the meantime, caseworkers supported women to search for individual grants and, where possible, accessed limited support such as free SIM cards. Members heard that small allocations from the Centre's wider funds were sometimes used to assist with essential costs such as travel or top-ups, but it was confirmed that the organisation did not currently have the funding capacity to provide furniture or similar support, although this was an area it was working towards.

The Committee directed a question to the Stronger Communities Manager regarding references to a noticeable increase in community tensions and visible street-based issues, asking what data or baseline metrics underpinned this assessment.

It was explained that this observation related primarily to recent protests, particularly those associated with the placement of asylum seekers in hotels. Members were advised that the assessment was informed by a combination of anecdotal feedback from communities, discussions with colleagues, the police and schools, and reports of increased fear and concern among residents regarding their experiences in public spaces. The Stronger Communities Manager added that this was supported by reporting data relating to hate crime statistics, as well as direct observations of protest activity. She further noted that, at a national level, there had been an increase in inflammatory rhetoric in online spaces. From a Prevent perspective, it was explained that this was reflected in the nature of referrals received, as well as lower-level concerns and conversations that did not meet referral thresholds but nonetheless indicated worrying changes in attitudes and behaviours. The Stronger Communities Manager concluded that these combined factors contributed to ongoing concern and

were likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

Diane Faichney requested that if any members became aware of funding opportunities for work with children, particularly for holiday clubs and children's events, this information be shared with her organisation. She explained that previous Council grant funding for this work had ceased, that no charges were made for children's activities due to high levels of deprivation in the area, and that there was a pressing need for funding to continue delivering services for children, including those from specialised groups.

The Chair confirmed that this request would be passed on and suggested that ward councillors or other members might be able to share ideas or funding opportunities identified within their wards or communities. The Chair thanked the speakers for attending the meeting and for their invaluable input.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee:

- 1. Noted the activity undertaken to build stronger communities and promote community cohesion particularly in light of the challenges emerging from national and global events, a national rise in hate crime and threats from extremist influence and the impacts on local communities; and**
- 2. Noted the activity that had been undertaken during the past year in relation to delivering against the Prevent duty.**

152. **SAFER HILLINGDON PARTNERSHIP** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Chief Inspector Ben Wright of the Metropolitan Police Service, Daniel Johnson (Borough Commander for Hillingdon - London Fire Brigade) and Richard Webb, Director of Community Safety and Enforcement were in attendance to respond to Members' questions regarding the Safer Hillingdon Partnership update report. Councillor Wayne Bridges, Cabinet Member for Community & Environment, was also in attendance.

Councillors sought clarification on when the Safer Hillingdon Partnership Strategy, approved by Full Council, would begin to be implemented. Officers explained that the Strategy had now been formally adopted and published, and that work had already begun through the Safer Hillingdon Partnership on developing a delivery plan agreed by all partners. This delivery plan set out priority themes, associated activities, and performance measures to track progress. It was also reported that partners had reviewed a more comprehensive data dashboard, drawing together information from council services and partner organisations to provide a clearer picture of crime and disorder across the Borough and to assess the effectiveness of interventions. It was confirmed that, once outstanding details had been finalised, the delivery plan would be published and presented at a future meeting to allow Members to monitor progress against the agreed priorities.

Members asked about the London Fire Brigade's preparedness for incidents relating to Heathrow Airport. It was confirmed that the Fire Brigade routinely trained and prepared for a wide range of scenarios, including those associated with Heathrow. It was stated that six- and eight-minute response times for first and second fire engines were maintained across London in more than 95 per cent of cases. Local fire stations also undertook regular training programmes to ensure readiness for the broad range of

incidents that could arise in and around the airport.

The Committee enquired how intelligence was shared between agencies where crime risks and fire hazards overlapped, such as in cases involving cannabis factories. It was explained by the Police that joint working arrangements with the London Fire Brigade were well established, particularly through shared command, control, and communications structures used for major and critical incidents. While electricity providers were often the primary agency involved in cannabis factory cases, close liaison existed and the Fire Brigade would be involved where fire risk was present. The London Fire Brigade Borough Commander confirmed regular engagement with senior police officers, participation in borough security review meetings, and close alignment of borough risk management plans with identified threats. In addition, it was confirmed that the Brigade's fire safety regulation team was working alongside police partners locally to identify and mitigate risks wherever possible.

Members sought further clarification regarding police visibility, noting that residents frequently reported rarely seeing uniformed police patrols, a concern often raised at Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) meetings. They asked how often local police officers were abstracted from the Borough to support protests and events in central London. Clarification was sought on the scale of this abstraction, including any available figures or percentages indicating how much officer time was spent outside the Borough.

In response, the Chief Inspector explained that the level of abstraction fluctuated depending on national and international events, including geopolitical issues and protests linked to matters such as international conflict, asylum, and broader political activity, much of which manifested in central London. It was confirmed that, over the past three years, significant work had been undertaken to reduce the abstraction of dedicated ward officers from their local areas. Whereas abstraction had previously reached peaks of around 35%, it had since been reduced substantially. On average, abstraction was now estimated at approximately 10–15%, and this figure included time spent on training and other duties, not solely deployments to central London.

The Chief Inspector further explained that the police service remained focused on crime-fighting outcomes rather than visibility alone, with productivity having increased significantly. Improvements were reported across key measures including arrests, charges, cautions, and convictions, reflecting increased operational effectiveness. It was acknowledged, however, that visibility continued to be challenging due to sustained resource pressures. Reductions in police numbers had occurred, with approximately 3,000 officers cut in the current year following prolonged reductions over the past 15 years, and further reductions were anticipated. Despite these challenges, it was noted that officers were working intensively to address residents' concerns, while recognising that public expectations around visibility remained understandably high.

Members raised further enquiries regarding the uptake of the Met Engage platform, noting that it had replaced the previous system and that Hillingdon had historically seen high engagement levels. Clarification was sought on current take-up rates and whether the new platform had achieved comparable levels of participation.

The Chief Inspector confirmed that Met Engage was a key communication tool, enabling two-way engagement between the police and residents. It was used to share crime prevention advice, provide information, and receive intelligence from the community. It was reported that substantial work had been undertaken over the

preceding 12 months, including collaboration with Neighbourhood Watch, to increase registrations. While the previous platform had achieved approximately 20% engagement, Met Engage had not yet reached that level; however, current trajectories suggested this would be achieved by the two-year mark. It was noted that this would represent a refreshed and more active membership base. The volume and quality of interaction on the platform were reported to be strong, with some wards identified for further targeted engagement. Met Engage performance formed part of regular monthly performance monitoring, and it was reported that Hillingdon was ranked at or near the top across London in terms of sign-ups and overall registrations.

The Committee formally placed on record its thanks to Dave Ludlow, Kevin Mappam, and all those involved in Neighbourhood Watch. It was noted that Neighbourhood Watch volunteers attended the Hillingdon Safer Neighbourhood Board, worked closely with the Police, and gave their time voluntarily to support community safety.

Councillors questioned the Police regarding the operating hours of Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) officers. While expressing strong praise for the local ward team and its officers, concern was raised that SNT shifts ended at 11.00pm, despite the ward containing late-night activity and licensed premises operating until 2.00am. Councillors reported receiving complaints from residents about antisocial behaviour, noise, and late-night drinking, and asked whether SNT shifts could be made more flexible to provide a visible policing presence later into the night where issues persisted.

In response, it was explained that designated ward officers were not the only policing resource available and that emergency response teams operated on a 24-hour basis, 365 days a year. It was confirmed that incidents at late-night venues could be dealt with by these teams as required. The Chief Inspector stated that licensed premises were not a significant driver of crime within the Borough and highlighted the effectiveness of joint working between the Council's licensing team and the Police in preventing and managing issues associated with licensed premises. It was explained that police resourcing was deployed based on risk, and that other issues, such as acquisitive crime at locations including Lombardy Retail Park, currently posed a greater risk and required daytime ward officer presence to achieve the greatest impact. However, it was confirmed that if specific intelligence identified an emerging or serious issue at a licensed premise, shifts could be adjusted accordingly. It was emphasised that resourcing decisions took a borough-wide view of risk rather than relying solely on ward-based teams.

The Committee directed a question to the London Fire Brigade representative regarding the Fire Cadets and Junior Citizens programmes, noting that around 3,000 Year 6 pupils participated annually. Members asked for further information on the programmes, their impact on building resilience and fire safety awareness among young people, and how education was carried into the home to help prevent fires.

In response, it was explained that no direct statistical evidence was available on the long-term impact of the Junior Citizens and Fire Cadets programmes, noting that their benefits were largely anecdotal. It was noted that educating young people was believed to have lasting value, as lessons learned could carry into adulthood and be shared within families, particularly supporting those who may not have been familiar with UK fire prevention practices. The primary aim of the Year 6 programme was to help children identify fire hazards and understand potential risks, enabling them to recognise similar hazards in their own homes. This included awareness of risks associated with

electrical appliances, candles, cooking practices, and the safe use of lithium-ion batteries. The sessions were described as highly visual and interactive to ensure engagement and formed part of a wider programme of activities delivered through the Junior Citizens Scheme.

In response to further questions from the Committee, the Chief Inspector explained that the Police Service had faced a £460 million budget deficit in the previous year, part of which had been addressed through funding provided by the Mayor, leaving a remaining shortfall of around £200 million that resulted in a series of cuts. It was confirmed that the underlying structural deficit remained unresolved, and that funding arrangements for the following year were still unclear. It was stated that the lack of certainty around future funding made long-term strategic planning difficult and clarity was needed to allow the organisation to plan effectively.

Members expressed concern that the public narrative around police funding appeared inconsistent, noting reports of an increase in the Mayor of London's council tax precept for policing and announcements of additional officers and PCSOs, which contrasted with perceptions of reduced capacity at a local level. It was queried whether policing resources were increasing or decreasing, as the situation on the ground appeared to differ from the broader strategic picture.

In response, the Chief Inspector acknowledged that the public narrative was often confusing. It was explained that, within Hillingdon, some increases had occurred over the previous four years, including additional sergeants, strengthened neighbourhood teams, and increases in certain PCSO numbers, with two dedicated ward officers continuing to be retained per ward. However, it was noted that a former support team of ten staff providing key administrative functions had been removed, resulting in additional pressures being placed on ward officers. Members heard that emergency response teams and headquarters functions across the Basic Command Unit had also been reduced as part of wider organisational cuts, including the removal of approximately 3,000 police officer posts across the Metropolitan Police during the year. While reference was made to possible future funding to address these reductions, it was confirmed that no such information had yet been communicated through internal channels.

The Committee sought further clarification as to whether recent increases and decreases in certain crime types were specific to Hillingdon or reflected wider London trends. It was explained that increases in reported offences relating to violence against women and girls were partly attributable to improved reporting and increased confidence among victims, including the reporting of historical offences. It was highlighted that additional resourcing had been directed towards public protection, leading to improved detection rates and positive outcomes, with particularly strong performance noted locally in comparison to other boroughs.

It was further explained that theft of motor vehicles reflected a national trend, with both national and local initiatives underway to address the issue, and that recent local figures had begun to decline. Burglary was reported to have peaked around December but had since reduced significantly following arrests and charges related to recent offending. Increases in violence with injury were attributed in part to stricter crime recording standards and were largely associated with domestic abuse rather than public-space violence, which was described as rare and closely monitored.

In relation to domestic violence, Councillors enquired whether there were mechanisms

for receiving referrals from schools, neighbours, or other agencies on a preventative or pre-offence basis, similar to referral pathways used for terrorism-related concerns. In response, the Chief Inspector confirmed that reports were regularly received from neighbours, third parties, and partner agencies. It was explained that societal awareness and intolerance of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls had increased, although further progress was still required. It was confirmed that strong intelligence mechanisms were in place, including for more technical offences, and that members of the public and partner agencies were encouraged to report any suspicious concerns, whether relating to domestic violence or other matters.

Members requested further detail on stop and search, noting that while the published statement was positive, residents and young people often sought clearer explanations of how the process operated. The Chief Inspector responded that stop and search was an important policing tool, while acknowledging that it could be harmful if used improperly. It was reported that over the previous three years the number of stop and searches had increased gradually, while positive outcomes had risen significantly. Approximately 40% of searches were resulting in a positive outcome, meaning prohibited items had been found. It was further explained that around 90% of stop and searches were video recorded and independently audited through dip sampling by an external panel, with findings reported to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime. Members of the public were able to complain at any time, with footage available for review. The Chief Inspector stated that stop and search was being used appropriately across the Basic Command Unit and expressed a desire to see its use continue to increase while maintaining high detection rates, as it was effective in preventing violent crime, drug-related crime, and theft.

In relation to stop and search, Councillors asked whether any groups were disproportionately represented and, if so, whether engagement work had been undertaken with those communities. It was confirmed that disproportionality existed when measured against population size, with Black residents more likely to be stopped per head of population, although White residents accounted for the highest overall number of stops. It was stated that those being stopped were doing so on legitimate grounds, as evidenced by detection outcomes, and that complaints were very rare. The Chief Inspector emphasised that stop and search was conducted based on behaviour and intelligence rather than identity, and that officers were trained to explain grounds clearly. It was also explained that the use of broader powers, such as Section 60, was accompanied by extensive communication with communities through media, Independent Advisory Groups, and Safer Neighbourhood Boards, with figures scrutinised regularly. Reference was made to consultation on the stop and search charter, during which Hillingdon residents had expressed strong support for increased use of stop and search.

The Chief Inspector clarified that preventing crime was the primary objective of stop and search and confirmed that extensive engagement work was taking place. This included regular meetings with faith leaders, close partnership working with the Council, schools, and third-sector organisations, and participation in initiatives such as Junior Citizens, where pupils received education on stop and search, individual rights, and legal responsibilities. Additional engagement was noted with asylum accommodation providers and through Home Office-led programmes to ensure new arrivals understood legal expectations. It was stated that these combined efforts were intended to reduce offending and improve understanding across communities.

In response to further questions from the Committee regarding fires caused by electric

bikes, electric scooters, and lithium-ion batteries, and whether these incidents were becoming a significant issue, the London Fire Brigade representative confirmed that such fires were an increasing trend and stated that this issue had become a major focus of the Charge Safe campaign. It was explained that the growth in lithium-ion battery use, particularly through online-purchased kits for bikes and scooters, had contributed to the rise in incidents. Although precise statistics were not provided, it was confirmed that every lithium-ion battery fire was reviewed by the fire investigation team. The rapid and hazardous nature of these fires was highlighted, with emphasis placed on education and risk reduction through public awareness.

The Committee asked the Fire Brigade whether a non-emergency reporting option existed for situations such as bonfires producing heavy smoke, noting that the only available option appeared to be calling 999, which could result in a full emergency response. The Borough Commander for Hillingdon acknowledged the concern and explained that responses depended on the assessed level of risk, as fires could escalate rapidly. It was stated that crews aimed to educate residents where possible rather than simply extinguishing fires. Issues relating to clean air legislation were identified as falling under local authority enforcement. While community engagement requests could be made through general enquiries, it was explained that there was no current evidence locally or across London to justify a separate non-emergency fire response line, and that rapid attendance remained important for public safety.

In response to Members' questions regarding hoarding, the Borough Commander for Hillingdon explained that hoarding cases were managed through joint working with partners such as social services, the London Ambulance Service, and the Metropolitan Police. Where concerns were identified, crews provided home fire safety advice and engagement. It was confirmed that properties presenting increased fire risk due to hoarding were recorded on an operational risk database, enabling fire crews across London to be alerted to associated hazards and to tailor their response accordingly.

Members sought further clarification as to how Council officers worked collaboratively with the Fire Brigade and the police to ensure the safety of high-rise buildings, and how partnership working with the police was used to address antisocial behaviour (ASB) in parks, particularly following the decision not to lock park gates. It was asked how data and incidents relating to parks were shared, how the police supported this work, and how joint working could further improve responses to ASB.

Officers explained that a range of partnership arrangements were in place. In relation to parks and ASB, information on trends, patterns, and hotspots was routinely shared with the police. Where repeated complaints or emerging patterns of antisocial behaviour were identified, the Council's relevant team initiated targeted work and engaged directly with neighbourhood policing teams. This approach was driven by evidence and patterns rather than isolated incidents. It was further explained that daily reviews of violent crime reports were undertaken jointly with the police and the fire service, enabling recurring issues or location-based risks to be identified. These reviews informed decisions on additional preventative measures such as improved lighting, CCTV provision, and environmental changes, including vegetation management.

In relation to fire safety in high-rise buildings, officers explained that the Council operated a high-rise fire safety programme aligned with national definitions and funding arrangements set by central government. The programme involved identifying high-rise buildings, understanding associated risks, and implementing mitigation measures. This

work was undertaken in close partnership with the Fire Brigade. Specialist expertise was applied to assess building access and construction, while the Fire Brigade provided detailed input on fire safety measures in communal areas. A comprehensive register of high-rise buildings was maintained, recording risk status and mitigation activity. Where necessary, enforcement notices were used to compel remedial action, although it was noted that such cases could involve lengthy processes, including appeals and long-term construction works. Referrals and inspections by the Fire Brigade often triggered further Council involvement where additional risks were identified.

The Borough Commander for Hillingdon confirmed that legislative changes had strengthened requirements for high-rise and other higher-risk buildings, defined as those over 18 metres or six storeys. It was explained that building emergency evacuation plans were now required and were being developed and stored electronically through a high-rise portal, with the local authority housing team overseeing this work. The Fire Brigade had, for several years, maintained detailed operational risk plans for all high-rise premises on its database, including building layouts, to support effective emergency responses. Any call to a high-rise building attracted an enhanced attendance due to the elevated risk. It was also confirmed that where residents required specific evacuation arrangements, those details were recorded to ensure prioritisation during incidents.

The Chair raised concerns regarding reports of conflicts between local secondary schools. While acknowledging that such issues were not new and had historically amounted largely to playground discussion, the Chair noted that recent reports suggested a more organised nature, including the involvement of individuals from outside schools and the potential presence of weapons. It was therefore asked what preventative work was being undertaken with schools to address and mitigate this apparent escalation.

The Chief Inspector responded that there was a risk of overstating the situation, noting that similar issues had occurred historically. It was confirmed that the individuals responsible for the online posts that had circulated widely across London had been arrested and were being dealt with appropriately. The Chief Inspector stated that there had been strong joint working between the police, the Council, schools, and parents, particularly in relation to information sharing to inform an effective policing response. It was confirmed that no significant incidents had occurred within Hillingdon and that intelligence-led activity, supported by a proactive and well-informed community, had enabled potential issues to be prevented. The matter was reported to have subsided, and it was suggested that further attention could risk unnecessarily reigniting concerns. The Chief Inspector commended the community response and confirmed that those responsible for initiating the issue were being addressed, with the expectation that this would conclude the matter.

The Chair welcomed the reassurance provided and thanked the officers in attendance for their contributions, expressing appreciation on behalf of the Committee and the wider Council for the work undertaken by police and fire services to keep residents in Hillingdon safe, and asked that thanks be passed on to frontline officers.

RESOLVED: 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.

153. **ENFORCEMENT OF PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS, STREET TRADING & FIXED PENALTY NOTICES** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Richard Webb, Director of Community Safety and Enforcement, Daniel Ferrer, Licensing Team Manager, and Dave Holmes, ASB Team Leader, were in attendance to respond to Members' queries and requests for clarification in relation to the report included in the agenda pack. Councillor Wayne Bridges, Cabinet Member for Community & Environment was also in attendance.

Members commented that the Council's website did not provide an option for reporting littering from a vehicle, noting that they had personally witnessed such an incident and had been unable to report it online. The Chair responded that this feedback would be noted and advised that the relevant Cabinet Member was present and would have heard the comment, particularly in relation to improvements to the Members' enquiries process and the "Clean Up My Streets" application.

Councillors asked how the Council's use of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) compared with neighbouring boroughs. Officers replied that Hillingdon was broadly comparable, explaining that FPNs were a mechanism to avoid prosecution and that the Council focused on maintaining high standards and working with available evidence. It was noted that while some boroughs issued higher numbers of tickets, officers could not comment on comparative success rates.

The Committee asked what steps had been taken to improve signage, clarity of restrictions and public awareness in areas with high volumes of enforcement activity, particularly in relation to engine idling and footway obstructions. Councillors cited cases where residents felt signage was inadequate or absent when entering enforcement zones. Officers responded that signage was an ongoing challenge; efforts were made to install signage where required, though signs could be removed or deteriorate and were replaced when possible. Officers added that information was also available on the Council's website and that enforcement measures were subject to consultation processes with relevant organisations.

Members raised concerns about FPNs issued to businesses for waste documentation, questioning whether internal checks were undertaken where businesses used the Council's own waste services. It was suggested that issuing FPNs without first checking internal records was a potential waste of officer time and resources. Officers clarified that FPNs were not issued immediately; instead, a notice was served allowing seven days for documentation to be produced, with an FPN issued only if this was not provided. Officers acknowledged past issues with inter-departmental communication and confirmed that closer working arrangements were now in place with waste services, including the sharing of lists of businesses with Council waste contracts. It was explained that, following a review of processes, regular inter-team meetings had been established across enforcement, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and licensing functions to share information, identify problematic premises and ensure proportionate and coordinated enforcement.

The Cabinet Member added that waste services and enforcement teams were now working proactively together, with a programme being rolled out to visit all premises, maintain a register of visits and actions taken, and ensure businesses held appropriate licences and waste contracts. It was explained that intelligence was continually updated due to the high turnover of businesses, and enforcement activity was targeted accordingly.

Members enquired how many FPNs issued were paid, cancelled or unpaid, and whether proportional data was available. Officers referred to figures in the report, correcting an error in published data relating to June figures and explaining that total FPNs issued were higher than initially stated. Officers explained the payment process, including 14- and 28-day payment periods, and noted a lag between issue and payment.

Councillors raised a separate question regarding Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs), expressing concern that enforcement appeared concentrated repeatedly in the same locations and questioning whether this indicated a lack of behavioural change. Officers responded that a significant proportion of FPNs issued related to the relatively new PSPO introduced in February of the previous year, and that targeted enforcement was expected during its early implementation. It was stated that behavioural change had been observed, particularly in relation to the Heathrow taxi and private hire vehicle PSPO, noting that repeat offences were low and that drivers had altered behaviour by using appropriate waiting locations rather than residential streets.

Councillors sought clarification as to how much enforcement income was reinvested into community safety or enforcement resources. It was confirmed that income from fines broadly covered the cost of the contracted environmental enforcement service, with no significant surplus or deficit, although a modest surplus had arisen due to Heathrow PSPO volumes. It was noted that income was largely reinvested into service delivery.

The Committee asked whether ASB data was available to assess the impact of service closures and changes such as leaving green space gates unlocked. Officers stated that such data had not yet been drawn together and that there was an inherent lag in data collection, though this would be available in time. Councillors suggested starting with reported incidents as an initial dataset, and officers confirmed that borough-wide data would be considered.

Members requested further details of how enforcement was approached for more niche or seasonal PSPO issues, such as amplified music at Ruislip Lido, and how enforcement activity was communicated to residents. It was explained that intelligence was gathered to identify patterns and allocate resources accordingly. Examples were cited such as motorbike activity in green spaces, where joint working with the Metropolitan Police had resulted in enforcement action and the issuing of explanatory notices.

With regards to dog control requirements, Members described an incident in a green space where dogs off leads had attacked people, and queried reporting routes where PSPO provisions appeared unclear. It was clarified that such incidents fell outside PSPO enforcement and constituted offences of dogs being dangerously out of control, which were matters for the police.

The Committee sought clarity as to why no FPNs had been issued for begging despite significant enforcement action for verbal abuse. It was explained that begging fell under the Vagrancy Act, an outdated and weak piece of legislation that was no longer routinely applied and was subject to legislative reform. It was clarified that some elements of begging could be enforced where associated with intimidation or distress. Members expressed concern that begging was widespread across the Borough and

suggested that the issue be reviewed as a priority and brought to the attention of Cabinet Members.

The Cabinet Member for Community & Environment stated that this would be taken on board. He acknowledged that begging had become an increasingly significant issue across the Borough, particularly in town centres and high streets, and noted that the problem had worsened in recent years. He referred to ongoing issues within his own ward, including persistent begging around locations such as schools, and confirmed that the matter would be discussed with officers in due course.

Officers confirmed that the issue would be reviewed. They clarified that the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) restriction applied specifically to begging for food or money where such behaviour caused harassment, alarm or distress to another person. Members were informed that, in order to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN), the witnessing officer would need to be satisfied that these additional elements were present. It was noted that this created challenges for officers on the street, as simply observing begging was not sufficient to justify enforcement action. Officers advised that the current approach aligned with government guidance, which expected a supportive approach to be taken initially, particularly where individuals were begging due to their circumstances rather than by choice, before moving towards punitive measures.

In response to further questions from the Committee, officers confirmed that flyposting was included in the reported numbers of business-related FPNs and advertising offences. They explained that advertising offences covered a wide range of activities, including estate agents' boards, sports advertising, advertisements on street furniture, and flyposting of various types.

Councillors asked whether anything could be done under the PSPO to address noise from out-of-hours building work. While acknowledging that building work was generally covered by building control and planning enforcement, they highlighted frequent complaints from residents about noise on Saturdays and Sundays, such as scaffolding work using impact drivers early in the morning. In response, officers confirmed that a PSPO was not required, as existing legislation was already in place to deal with noise from out-of-hours building work.

Members enquired whether any third-party support could be used to assist with the enforcement of PSPOs, or whether there were examples from other boroughs where enforcement had been successful. Reference was made to previous evidence from APCOA, which had demonstrated successes beyond the issuing of parking tickets. They asked whether individuals or organisations with relevant experience, including those associated with community safety or enforcement, could support enforcement activity across PSPOs, illegal street trading and related matters.

Officers responded that the issuing of FPNs could only be undertaken by authorised persons, namely council officers, police officers or police community support officers. They confirmed that the Council worked with the police to enforce PSPOs. It was explained that, following the move from paper ticket books to electronic ticketing, police officers were encouraged to provide a simple statement, after which the Council could take responsibility for progressing the case, including prosecution if necessary. This approach reduced the burden on the police and was reported to be working effectively. It was further emphasised that PSPO FPNs were only one of several enforcement tools available to the Council; other teams, including licensing and out-of-hours services, operated under separate legislative powers. In relation to street trading, Members were

informed that enforcement did not always need to begin with an FPN and could include verbal warnings or initial engagement. Where necessary, prosecution could be pursued, and licensing matters could be addressed through variation, review or consideration by a licensing sub-committee at renewal.

The importance of cross-team working within the Council was noted. It was explained that officers across services, including waste services, were encouraged to act as the “eyes and ears” of the Council when operating on the streets, supporting enforcement teams by identifying issues and helping to build evidence. Officers highlighted the value of proactive approaches, such as early engagement with businesses that incorrectly left commercial waste bins on the public highway. It was noted that informal conversations could often resolve issues quickly, with enforcement action reserved for persistent non-compliance.

The Cabinet Member emphasised that enforcement relating to FPNs, particularly for flyposting, was not solely about issuing penalties but also about adopting different and more creative approaches. He welcomed confirmation that FPNs had been successfully issued for flyposting in Charville, including a case involving a business flyposting on park land. He further referred to the Committee’s previous discussions on flyposting associated with funfairs, where a deposit scheme had been suggested, noting this as a positive example of innovative and collaborative problem-solving. The Cabinet Member highlighted the importance of cross-party working and engagement across multiple services and departments and assured the Committee that such discussions were ongoing both within the Committee and across the Council, provided that all parties continued to work together constructively.

RESOLVED: That the Residents’ Services Select Committee noted the content of the report.

154. **BUDGET AND SPEND REPORT** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Dan Kennedy, Corporate Director – Residents’ Services, Matt Davis, Director – Strategic & Operational Finance and Ceri Lamoureux – Head of Finance – Residents’ Services were in attendance to respond to Members’ queries in respect of the Budget and Spent report.

Members referred to point 19 of the report on page 78 and noted that the gross budget pressure was largely driven by temporary accommodation and homelessness support, with Heathrow having a material effect on local supply and demand. It was highlighted that 82% of rough sleepers were not Heathrow-driven, and clarification was sought on what actions were being taken to ensure the remaining target was achievable and how overall homelessness numbers were being reduced.

In response, it was explained that a proactive approach had been adopted. Members heard that officers were working closely with private sector landlords, identified as one of the largest sources of homelessness presentations in the Borough. Engagement was taking place with landlords seeking to evict tenants to understand circumstances, negotiate, and mediate wherever possible to prevent evictions. Where eviction could not be prevented, including cases involving friends and family, domestic abuse, or private sector evictions, efforts were being made to secure alternative suitable accommodation, usually within the private rented sector, through work with other landlords. It was further stated that, with Cabinet support, a significant increase in council-owned social rented properties had been delivered during the year. This had

helped to alleviate pressures by enabling eligible local residents to move from high-cost temporary accommodation into secure, settled homes. In addition, it was confirmed that capped or fixed rates for temporary accommodation had been successfully negotiated over the previous 12 months, providing greater cost control in a market where nightly rates were typically increasing by more than 10%. It was acknowledged that the market remained extremely challenging, with a number of landlords exiting, potentially due to forthcoming reforms and increased compliance requirements. However, it was emphasised that all possible measures were being taken, with Cabinet support, to prevent homelessness and support families into settled accommodation as quickly as possible.

Councillors requested an explanation of point 21. Officers responded that this budget line comprised a range of measures, including some increases in income, more efficient cost controls, and improved management practices, particularly within the museum and bunkers service. It was stated that similar approaches were being applied across the Council to ensure best value for residents and prudent financial management.

A further question was raised in relation to point 14 concerning increased fleet insurance costs, and clarification was sought on whether the review to mitigate these costs was still ongoing or had concluded. It was confirmed that the review was underway and expected to conclude in early April. It was added that measures to manage insurance costs had already been in place for several years and were being strengthened through increased training and more detailed analysis of the causes of insurance claims. It was acknowledged that the insurance market remained extremely challenging, and that smarter ways of working, including improved vehicle use and enhanced safety training for drivers and staff, were being pursued.

Councillors referred to point 16, noting a forecast shortfall of £0.9 million against the garden waste subscription and further pressures across income streams, with the trade waste income target rolled over to 2025/26. Clarification was sought on how this aligned with the £2.6 million opportunities identified within resident services, including waste funding. In response, it was explained that a range of measures was being considered across waste services. It was noted that the Council had previously been open about commercial waste fees and charges, which had allowed competitors to undercut the service. A different approach was therefore being adopted, including a comprehensive review of commercial waste opportunities. Confidence was expressed that a greater market share could be secured, given the Council's local presence and reliability, alongside more proactive engagement with local businesses. It was also explained that opportunities related to waste prevention were being pursued, including promoting waste reduction among residents and businesses and ensuring waste was disposed of through the most cost-effective streams. By way of example, it was highlighted that more than 20,000 residents living in flats now had access to food waste caddies, enabling significant unit cost reductions by diverting waste from household waste streams to food waste processing. It was stated that this work would continue, and satisfaction was expressed with the progress made and residents' positive engagement with food waste recycling.

The Committee sought further clarification in relation to the savings tracker at table 2, noting that 48% of savings had been banked by month 9 and querying confidence that savings marked as "green – delivery in progress" would be fully delivered by the end of the financial year. Officers responded that, given the advanced stage of the financial year, all savings had been critically reviewed with the support of the finance team and

confidence was expressed that they would be delivered. It was stated that remaining issues had been resolved and that learning had been incorporated into future programmes.

A further question was raised in relation to point 25, where mitigations were being sought in-year. Clarification was requested on the nature of these mitigations and the impact assessments being undertaken, particularly in relation to service reductions or vacancy management. In response, it was explained that the senior management team, working with Cabinet, had been continuously reviewing service delivery to identify efficiencies. Mitigations were being achieved through smarter working, including the Council's digital strategy, use of artificial intelligence, and improved data and intelligence. These approaches were enabling efficiencies and service changes to be delivered without adverse impacts on frontline service delivery, and this work was expected to continue.

The Chair commented on the attendance of finance officers at monthly budget monitoring meetings, noting that while the reports were important, finance officers were often present without being asked questions. It was suggested that the arrangements be reviewed to ensure effective use of officer time, particularly given the service-focused nature of the Committee's discussions. The Chair proposed that this be discussed offline with the relevant Labour Lead and officers to agree a more balanced approach, and this suggestion was acknowledged.

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee:

- 1. Noted the budget monitoring position as of December 2025 (Month 9) for the Council; and**
- 2. Noted the budget monitoring position as of December 2025 (Month 9) for the services within the remit of the Residents' Services Select Committee.**

155. **FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 9*)

RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

156. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 10*)

The Chair introduced the work programme and reported on a recent visit undertaken with Councillor Davies and refuse services staff at Harlington Depot. It was stated that the visit had been informative and had included observing recycling crews in operation. The professionalism of staff was noted, and it was reported that feedback previously raised by the Committee regarding post-collection practices, including the clearing and stacking of bags and the obstruction of pavements, had been heard and positively received. Discussions had taken place with crew leaders, who were described as highly engaged in their work. Particular reference was made to a crew leader, Jerome, whose commitment to high standards and detailed approach to team management was highlighted. Appreciation was expressed for refuse staff, who were described as often overlooked but consistently working in challenging conditions, and it was requested that the Committee's thanks be formally recorded.

Councillor Davies added that the visit had been enlightening, particularly following discussions with Craig, a gang leader who had progressed from temporary

	<p>employment to a full-time role with the Council. It was noted that this progression had positively impacted his personal circumstances, and this was cited as an example of the benefits arising from the Council's employment practices.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member thanked frontline staff for their work and expressed appreciation for the Committee's engagement in visiting services on the ground. It was stated that frontline visits were an effective means of understanding service delivery and had been strongly supported during the Cabinet Member's previous tenure as Chair of the Committee. It was further noted that staff valued the interest and feedback provided by Members.</p> <p>The Chair thanked contributors and reminded Members that, as the authority approached the pre-election period, care would need to be taken in relation to frontline visits. It was confirmed that the Committee would continue to meet in April and that a substantial agenda, including consideration of houses in multiple occupation, was scheduled.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Residents' Services Select Committee considered the Work Programme report and agreed any amendments.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.53 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@hillington.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, officers, the press and members of the public.