

Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday 18th May 2026.

Present: Cllr Jim Beall (Chair), Cllr Steve Nelson (Vice-Chair), Cllr Stephen Dodds, Cllr Sufi Mubeen, Cllr David Reynard, Cllr Tony Riordan, Cllr Ted Strike, Cllr Marilyn Surtees and Cllr Sylvia Walmsley

Officers: Jane Edmends, Marc Stephenson, Stephen Donaghy (Adults, Health and Wellbeing) and Michelle Gunn (Corporate Services)

Also in attendance: Cllr Norma Stephenson

Apologies:

PLA/7/26 Evacuation Procedure

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedures.

PLA/8/26 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

PLA/9/26 Minutes

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PLA/10/26 Progress Update of Previously Agreed Recommendations - Affordable Housing

Consideration was given to assessments of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the Committee's previously completed review of Affordable Housing. This was the second update following the Committee's agreement of the action plan in June 2025 and two of the outstanding recommendations had been fully achieved.

Recommendation 2, regarding investigation of a hybrid model to address the borough's affordable housing need, was assessed as on track due to the impact being long term. The model of delivery would be considered as each site opportunity became available, ensuring that the most effective model would be utilised. Discussion took place regarding direct delivery. It was noted this did not always mean the Council building new homes, but could also be buying properties, including the possibility of buying properties that could be suitable for conversion.

A further progress update on the impact of the outstanding recommendation was requested in six months.

AGREED that the progress update be noted and the assessment of progress be confirmed and a further update presented in six months.

PLA/11/26 Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and the Protection of Pets

The Committee considered the draft scope and project plan for the Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and the Protection of Pets. The aim of the review was to address the challenges to the long-term sustainability and cost of services and thereby continue to provide excellent care for animals and ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

Members received a background presentation setting out the context of the review. The key points of the presentation highlighted were:

- The Council provided essential welfare services to protect both animals and public safety, which included both statutory functions and discretionary duties. Statutory functions were mainly focused on stray dogs, but the service also dealt with the handling of neglected and dangerous animals.
- The service operated 365 days a year, receiving an average of 1,300 requests. The team consisted of four members of staff and a manager. The service was providing a high standard of care and had been receiving the RSPCA's Gold and Platinum Awards for approximately 20 years.
- There had been an increase in stray dogs since 2022/23, e.g. a dog that had escaped from a property or off the lead when out and were on the street, however the return to owner rate was exceptionally high due to the hard work carried out by the team. When stray dogs couldn't be reunited or when owners gave up their dog as they couldn't afford to keep them, they were given a second chance via rehoming. A very low number of dogs were put to sleep, and this was only done if they failed to meet two assessment and/or had a poor quality of life.
- The Team worked collaboratively with a mix of partner agencies and organisations.
- The service was under increasing pressure from rising demand, cost, and more complex cases, driven by wider trends in pet ownership. There were also pressures due to reduced rehoming capacity/kennelling capacity, with the number of kennelling providers decreasing. Providers that were still in operation tended to be smaller and some were moving into the day care market.

Discussions took place regarding the Council's responsibilities and support provided for people unable to take care of their pets. It was noted that Adult Social Care held responsibility to intercede when an individual was unable to look after their estate and Licensing held responsibility regarding kennelling and breeder standards. It was noted that if the Animal Welfare service provided the minimum statutory service only it would not be able to achieve the RSPCA's Gold award. At minimum statutory service level the service may receive a lower award or possibly not receive any recognition. Responsible pet ownership campaigns were also raised and these would be welcomed as they would assist with the pressure on the service.

Members highlighted the following to be included in the scope and project plan:

- The support given to help vulnerable/homeless individuals to care for their pets be added as a key line of enquiry and PDSA invited to give evidence
- Licensing be invited to give evidence regarding how they supported and ensured high standards of animal welfare
- Adult Social Care be invited to give evidence regarding the support for individuals with pets going into hospital or care

AGREED that the presentation be noted and the scope and project plan be approved with the amendments outlined.

PLA/12/26 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The Chair noted that the Committee's Final Report for the Scrutiny Review of Capital Projects was presented to Cabinet on 14 May, where they accepted the recommendations and had thanked the Committee for their work. An action plan outlining how the recommendations would be implemented would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting and added to the work programme.

AGREED the work programme be noted.

Chair: