

MINUTES OF THE Overview and Scrutiny Committee HELD ON Thursday, 26th March, 2026, 7pm - 9.35pm

PRESENT:

**Councillors: Matt White (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair),
Makbule Gunes, Anna Lawton and Adam Small**

ALSO ATTENDING – Cllr Rossetti

103. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair opened the meeting by referring attendees to the formal notice regarding filming and recording at meetings. Members and attendees were reminded that the meeting could be recorded in accordance with the Council's access to information and transparency requirements. The Chair briefly outlined the procedural format of the meeting, including how the call-in would be conducted, the order of representations, and how questions would be taken. This information was noted by those present

104. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

105. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business raised for consideration. However, the Chair informed Members that a supplementary agenda pack had been circulated prior to the meeting. This supplementary documentation contained relevant background information and supporting material pertinent to the call-in under consideration. Members confirmed that they had received and noted the contents of the supplementary pack.

106. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

During discussion relating to murals within Muswell Hill, Councillor Connor declared an interest on the basis that she was a Councillor for Muswell Hill Ward. The declaration was noted.

107. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

108. CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION ON NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (NCIL) SPENDING ROUND 2

Councillor Rossetti presented the call-in and the following points were noted as part of her presentation:

- The absence of clear and demonstrable evidence of public support for certain projects approved for NCIL funding, specifically the mural proposals and the Civic Centre Woodland Garden. It was questioned how these projects had been identified and prioritised in the absence of explicit nominations or visible support within the consultation evidence.
- Reference was made to the Commonplace consultation, where it was noted that there were no clear references to the Woodland Garden proposal or associated elements such as information boards. While officers had indicated that some information was withheld on reasonable grounds, it was argued that this limited transparency made it difficult for residents and Members to understand how particular projects had been weighted and selected.

Councillor Rossetti further stated that consultation results had shown residents prioritising practical infrastructure improvements, particularly street and kerbside enhancements such as better pavements, crossings, and accessibility measures. In contrast, murals had been categorised within the capital programme as cultural facilities rather than infrastructure improvements. It was noted that the Cabinet report included examples of street and kerbside improvements but did not explicitly reference murals within this category.

Additionally, the list of infrastructure priorities did not include cultural projects, leading to concerns about inconsistency in categorisation. It was also noted that there was no clear evidence of support from recognised stakeholder groups, including the Highgate and Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum.

Concerns were similarly raised regarding the Civic Centre Woodland Garden. Councillor Rossetti noted that a separate proposal for an indoor café at the Civic Centre had received no public support through consultation. However, more than 60 residents had supported a proposal to enclose Trinity Garden to improve safety for children. Despite this significant level of support, the Trinity Garden proposal had not been prioritised for funding, whereas the Woodland Garden, which lacked visible support, had been progressed.

Concerns were also expressed regarding the application of eligibility criteria, particularly in relation to funding availability. The Cabinet report stated that the Woodland Garden met the criterion of having no alternative funding sources. However, it was highlighted that officers had referenced a provisional allocation for the project, and that a call for expressions of interest for its design had already been issued. It was argued that this created an apparent contradiction: either funding had already been anticipated, or the criteria had not been applied correctly. This raised concerns about whether the decision-making process had been predetermined.

In addition, Councillor Rossetti contended that murals did not meet the definition of capital infrastructure, and that their classification had shifted between cultural infrastructure and street and kerbside improvements without clear justification. It was argued that this inconsistency further undermined confidence in the decision-making process.

A broader concern was raised regarding transparency, with particular reference to the absence of detailed information explaining how projects had been shortlisted, assessed, and scored. It was noted that, despite a large number of submissions being received, there was no accessible evidence showing how decisions had been reached or how competing projects had been comparatively evaluated.

In conclusion, Councillor Rossetti requested that the decision be reconsidered and not taken forward. It was further requested that a revised report be produced, including a comprehensive list of proposals, clear evidence of public support for each project, and a transparent assessment against the eligibility criteria. It was argued that this would enable more robust scrutiny and ensure public confidence in the process.

The following was noted in the discussion between the Committee and Cllr Rossetti.

- The distinction between nominated and funded projects was raised and it was clarified that the NCIL policy provides that funding decisions are made having regard to consultation results, rather than being limited solely to projects explicitly nominated. The consultation allowed for people to express their views, rather than a specific project, about the sort of area that they would like the council to consider funding and this could include cultural assets and a street and curbside improvement.
- It was noted that five out of the nine wards had indicated support for the murals. However, a concern was raised regarding the use of the term “public art” within the report, noting that it was not clear whether this specifically referred to murals. There were points raised on whether the consultation had explicitly identified murals as a priority.
- Further discussion took place regarding the apparent shift from cultural priorities to practical infrastructure improvements. It was contended that residents had consistently highlighted accessibility concerns, including the need for improved pavements, dropped kerbs, and tactile paving. It was suggested that some residents may have supported the category of “street and kerbside improvements” with the expectation that such accessibility improvements would be delivered.
- The consultation process was also examined, with questions raised and responded to as to why certain projects, such as the Civic Centre Woodland Garden, had not been explicitly included as options in the consultation.
- The Chair highlighted that consultation categories were intentionally broad and could overlap. For example, tree planting might reasonably fall within environmental improvements or street enhancements. It was therefore considered whether it was appropriate for consultation categories to be broader than specific project nominations.

Councillor Rossetti maintained that, notwithstanding this flexibility, there was insufficient evidence of direct support for the projects in question. It was reiterated that

deputations to Cabinet and expressed resident views should carry weight in the decision-making on NCIL funding allocation.

- Further points were raised regarding the lack of support for the Woodland Garden proposal and the absence of consideration for the Trinity Garden enclosure, which had received significant resident backing. It was questioned why a project without visible support had been prioritised over one with clear endorsement.
- The application of eligibility criteria was also discussed. Councillor Rossetti acknowledged that projects were not required to meet every criterion; however, it was emphasised that those meeting more criteria should be prioritised. Concerns were reiterated regarding the apparent contradiction in the funding assessment for the Woodland Garden.

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning (Deputy Leader) responded to the call-in, and the following was noted:

- Cllr Williams expressed disappointment at the call-in, noting that the NCIL programme represented a significant investment of £1.7 million across the borough, with further rounds of funding anticipated.
- It was highlighted that over 500 submissions for NCIL funding allocation had been received, requiring difficult decisions to be made. The projects being challenged, including tree planting and the Woodland Garden, were described as broadly aligned with resident priorities and beneficial to local communities.
- In relation to public art, it was stated that five out of nine NCIL areas had identified this as a priority. Concerns raised in the call-in were described as overly focused on terminology rather than the broader intent of enhancing the public realm.
- Officers were commended for their work in delivering engagement and developing the proposals. Reference was made to the Borough of Culture programme and the value of community-led public art in strengthening identity and cohesion. Examples were cited where murals had become valued and recognised local assets.
- It was also noted that, although the total funding appeared substantial, the amount available at local ward level was limited once distributed, making prioritisation necessary.

The following was noted in response to questions from the Committee on the call-in response:

- The consultation sought to understand both general public priorities and specific project preferences for funding. The top identified priority was tree planting and green spaces, which aligned strongly with proposals such as the Civic or Woodland Gardens projects, which met these aims effectively. Ideally, consultation would occur in two stages, first gathering priorities and then presenting detailed proposals; however, governance allowed only a single process. This approach collected broad feedback from many participants. The Committee further noted that decision-making did not rely solely on

consultation responses but also assessed how well projects met established criteria, supported by input from Council service experts who contributed to the report and its evaluation appendix.

- Understanding was sought on the connections between expressions of support for streets and curbside improvements leading to murals being taken forward as an action and why this support was not leading to actions for funding more accessibility requirements in the public realm. In response it was noted that a highly comprehensive process was taken forward that reviewed hundreds of projects, supported by extensive discussions with council officers across multiple departments. The approach was thorough and collaborative, with street and kerbside improvements considered as a broad, inclusive category. It was further noted that there were numerous potential street and kerbside projects that could fall within this broad category. While the OSC had previously referred to accessibility study, this was not familiar in this context, such proposals could be revisited and considered in future NCIL funding rounds, with openness to further review and inclusion.
- There was a query about whether it was necessary for a project to have public support in the area for it to be eligible for NCIL funding. Or whether there was just a need to demonstrate engagement and have regard to this on funding allocations. It was noted that NCIL funding followed government policy requiring community consultation, reflected in Haringey's governance. A comprehensive process included 2,700 responses, generating project priorities and suggestions. These were refined through internal review and expert input, with final recommendations selected based on strong alignment with consultation feedback and NCIL criteria.
- There was a further discussion on whether public art met the criteria for public realm improvements. In response it was noted that murals helped foster community connection, engagement, and lasting benefits. Collaborative art projects could help address youth disengagement, antisocial behaviour, and safety concerns, especially in neglected spaces. It was contended by the Cabinet Member that strong resident support existed for this with past consultations highlighting demand for accessible, inclusive art that brings people together and enhances local environments. The positive aspects of having murals in the community was accepted but there were further queries on the priority given to these above all other public realm improvements such as for example SUDS which could benefit areas prone to flooding or funding better walking paths and benches to help elderly and parents with young children. In response there was information shared on this being a infrastructure issue and that Neighbourhood CIL should be viewed alongside the larger Strategic CIL, which provided significantly more funding for major infrastructure. It was noted that while NCIL's £1.7 million could deliver local

impact, broader “nuts and bolts” projects like streetscape improvements were often funded through the wider strategic programme, offering greater overall investment in residents’ priorities. Officers added that there would always be competing views on how best to spend funding on infrastructure, and they had based recommendations on legal requirements, consultation feedback, NCIL governance, and equalities considerations. While views on priorities differed, decisions followed the adopted framework. There was a commitment to review governance within one to two years, allowing future public input, but current proposals reflected existing rules and constraints.

- Concerns were also raised that the issuing of a design tender prior to funding approval for project could give the impression that the outcome had been predetermined. In response, it was explained that preliminary design work was often undertaken in advance to ensure projects could proceed efficiently if funding was secured.
- Officers clarified that the criterion relating to “no alternative funding” was used as guidance rather than a strict rule. While borrowing was theoretically possible, it was stated that the Council’s capital programme was fully committed, and no viable alternative funding sources were available. It was confirmed that none of the recommended projects were already funded through other means.
- In response to a question about the consultation process and how robust it had been, Officers advised that there had been a strong, well-resourced consultation process which ensured broad engagement, clear accessibility, and there had been a thorough analysis of responses. Additional staffing supported the review of responses and engagement work. Outcomes combined consultation feedback with governance and guiding criteria, giving confidence in the robustness of the process and the professional advice informing decision-making.

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Responding to a follow up question on this, officers advised that a thorough internal process was undertaken, involving extensive team collaboration, senior oversight, and formal approvals. Reports were reviewed by leadership, including the corporate director, and subjected to legal and financial scrutiny. These checks and balances ensure confidence that robust internal consultation and governance standards were fully met.

In answer to a further follow up query on how the public can correlate the headline findings of the consultation with the allocated NCIL funding, officers advised that the Cabinet report included detailed appendices analysing projects against criteria, equality considerations, and key themes. It clearly reflected community priorities identified through consultation, ensuring the Cabinet report communicated a strong and transparent message about what matters most to residents.

Head of Legal Services:

The Head of Legal Services referred members to paragraph 6.8 of the report, which explained that the policy framework provided the general context for decision-making. It was noted that, provided decisions were consistent with the plans listed in paragraph 6.6, they were deemed to fall within the policy and budget framework.

The assessment, set out in paragraph 8, confirmed that the Cabinet decision of 10 March was within the policy framework. The Section 151 Officer also confirmed, in paragraph 10.1, that the decision was within the Council's budget framework.

At 8:23 pm, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee AGREED to pause the meeting to deliberate further on the call-in.

The meeting was reopened at 9.20pm.

Following consideration of all relevant information, the Committee reached its decision.

RESOLVED

1. In accordance with the Council Constitution, Part 4 Section H, paragraph 10, and further to considering the report of the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, as well as the evidence at the meeting, to agree that the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy Spending Round 2 decisions set out at attachment C in the supplementary pack and at page 48 were within the Budget and Policy Framework.
2. In accordance Council Constitution, Part 4 Section H, paragraph 10a, to agree to not take any further action, and the key decisions set out at attachment C in the supplementary pack and at page 48 be implemented immediately.

Reasons for decision.

In relation to Resolution 2, the Chair of the Committee outlined, that in relation to all four points of the Call in submission, the Committee considered that the Call in was focusing on two projects out of a large number of projects, receiving NCIL funding and none of the evidence considered indicated that the projects were not eligible for funding. Even with the issues of classification of the projects discussed, there was not enough evidence to suggest unreasonable decisions on project allocations made and the need to refer this decision back to Cabinet.

There was no suggestion in the Call in that the consultation was not conducted properly and the Committee noted that the public consultation role was informing the

decision, but the Committee were satisfied that Cabinet gave due regard to the consultation results.

The meeting noted that Councillor Connor was not in agreement with resolution 2 and the Chair invited her to set out her comments.

Cllr Connor confirmed that she was not in agreement with Resolution 2 and advised the meeting that she had not heard enough evidence at the meeting and within the reports to justify the proposals around the public support for the projects relating to ward murals and the Civic Centre garden and particularly the funding status of these proposed projects. Cllr Connor expressed that these were the two areas that she felt the reports were particularly weak on.

Cllr Connor advised that it was for these reasons that she supported the option set out at Council Constitution, Part 4 Section H, paragraph 10b to refer the decision back to the decision maker.

109. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

CHAIR: Councillor Matt White

Signed by Chair

Date