



## **Hounslow – an overview**

Hounslow is a West London borough that prides itself on its excellent services and its proven reputation for working to meet the needs of all sections of the community.

Covering 22 square miles, stretching from Heathrow Airport in the west to Chiswick in the east, Hounslow is one of the capital's most diverse boroughs. The area combines town and country and features modern housing estates, key industrial and business locations, quiet suburbs, green belt villages and bustling and fashionable cosmopolitan districts.

### **A Varied and Multicultural Borough**

Hounslow contains a number of long established “towns” and “villages”, each with their own sense of history and identity. These districts include Chiswick, Gunnersbury, Isleworth, Brentford, Heston, Feltham, Cranford, Hanworth, Bedfont and Hounslow itself.

Hounslow is a multicultural borough. More than a third of the Borough's 218,000 people come from minority ethnic communities – and the Council endeavours to ensure that its workforce, policies and approach to service delivery reflect that mix. Indeed, the Borough is strongly committed to equality of opportunity with clear policies on equalities issues, a comprehensive programme of staff training and a number of initiatives aimed at improving opportunities for black and ethnic minorities, women, disabled people, older people and other sectors of the community.

### **An Attractive Place to Live and Work**

The Borough boasts some of the most beautiful parks and open spaces in London with no fewer than five historic houses – Syon, Osterley, Chiswick, Boston Manor and Hogarth's House, the country's most important remaining link with the famous 18<sup>th</sup> century artist and satirist. There are also a number of other key tourist attractions, including the Kew Bridge Steam Museum and the Musical Museum.

Other leisure facilities include the Brentford Fountain and Feltham Airparcs leisure complexes, Heston pool, New Chiswick pool and Isleworth Recreation Centre. Paul Robeson Theatre in Hounslow Town Centre and Watermans Arts Centre, Brentford, are amongst West London's finest arts venues. The Borough is also home to Brentford FC and Hounslow Hockey Club.

Hounslow Town Centre is a busy and successful shopping area – the High Street boasts The Treaty Centre as well as many large retail names and has been further boosted by the completion of the Council's pedestrianisation scheme.



## **A Key Business Location**

The Borough is one of London's most vibrant locations for business – not surprising considering its excellent transport links including the close proximity of London's Heathrow Airport.

The A4 and M4 run through the Borough and the area boasts no fewer than eight London Underground stations and seven main line railway stations. Hounslow is home to national and international headquarters for Gillette, Glaxo SmithKline, IBM, DHL, Cable and Wireless, Sky TV and many more.

The Council has also been instrumental in winning Single Regeneration Budget funding for multi million pound regeneration projects in Brentford and Feltham and for "greening" the busy A4/M4 corridor.

Encouraging such regeneration and investment is considered critical as the Borough has identified pockets of poverty in some areas – most notably in Gunnersbury, Isleworth South and parts of Feltham.

In August 2000, at a special meeting, the Council's Sustainable Development Committee backed Blenheim Norwest's proposals for the town's Key Site One in Hounslow. The development will feature more than 236,000 sq.ft of new shops, restaurants, bars and cafes including a department store, a major foodstore and a new post office. Office space, suitable for a leading company together with smaller office space will be available. Stage One of the site was completed in 2007 and now hosts a large supermarket and adjoining private flats.

A 10-12 screen cinema is proposed as are 440 new flats. Work is currently underway to identify how many new homes could be earmarked for key workers such as teachers and nurses.

## **About the Council**

Following the Election in May 2006, Hounslow is under No Overall Control (NOC.) The Council has 20 wards with 60 elected members. Council policy is decided by all 60 elected Councillors meeting in full Council. Formal Council meetings are held to agree the Council Tax base and budget, elect the Mayor and other post holders and decide the main policy framework.

An Executive of nine councillors is responsible for bringing forward strategic policy proposals to be considered by the Council. This Executive is responsible for overseeing the operational management of the Council and for ensuring that policies agreed by the Council are carried out, within the agreed budgetary framework.

It must respond to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



Five Area Committees are responsible for monitoring the delivery of services in their areas. Up to three local people can be co-opted on to the Committees to help with this work. The Area Committees have devolved powers to decide planning applications involving fewer than 10

residential properties or less than 1,000m.sq. of commercial floor space. They also decide local traffic and parking schemes.

## **The Area Committees are:**

**Chiswick**

**Isleworth and Brentford**

**Heston and Cranford**

**Central Hounslow** (Hounslow South, Central and West and Hounslow Heath)

**West** (Feltham, Hanworth and Bedfont)

Larger developments, and environmental issues of Boroughwide or regional importance, are dealt with by the Sustainable Development Committee.

Hounslow also has a well-established overview and scrutiny committee, made up of several individual panels. These panels may co-opt up to three people to help them in their work and can invite people to give evidence. The results of their reviews are reported to the Executive who are charged with bringing forward proposals for change and Improvement.

## **Service Areas**

There are 5 main service areas. These are: Children's Services & Lifelong Learning, Community Services, Corporate Services, Environment and Finance.

The Council has initiated a programme of corporate restructuring, the change drivers being the Children's Act 2004, the Adult Green Paper and the demands of the modernisation agenda.

In April 2002 the Council established "Hounslow Homes" an "arms length management organisation" to deliver housing management services. Statutory and strategic housing functions continue to be retained by the Council. Since May 1998, leisure services have been provided by Community Initiatives Partnerships Ltd (CIP), a charitable not-for-profit company, set up and mainly funded by the Council.

## **Our Commitment to Building a Better Borough**

Since the Council Elections in May 2006, the Council has grappled with a phenomenal change agenda, culminating in a community strategy for 2008 – 2011. This has included the establishment of a new constitution with the Leader and Executive Model, and strong and effective Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, a wide range of management restructuring, significant externalisation of Council services, strong partnership working in key service areas and continued effective financial management.



The Council has been rated as “Good” by the Government’s Comprehensive Performance Assessment and we are committed to using this solid result as a platform for future improvement.

To build on these achievements and set out specific plans and corporate direction for the future, The Hounslow Plan sets out its strategic vision and its priorities for the Council based on ten over-arching themes. The plan’s focus falls into three main areas: organisational delivery, quality of life, and looking to the future:

- Ensuring value for money and high performance and quality services
- Transparencies, accountability and participation
- Safeguarding and enhancing the environment
- Tackling crime and disorder
- Improving school standards
- Building a stronger and more united community
- Supporting the vulnerable
- The Community Strategy Objectives (taking forward the projects in the current Community plan 2004 – 2007)
- A new community strategy for 2008 – 2011
- A vision for the physical development of the borough.