

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 17TH JANUARY, 2017, Times Not Specified

PRESENT:

Councillors: Charles Wright (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Makbule Gunes, Kirsten Hearn and Emine Ibrahim

83. FILMING AT MEETINGS

Noted.

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Yvonne Denny.

85. URGENT BUSINESS

It being a special meeting under Part 4, Section B, Paragraph 17 of the Council's Constitution, no other business was considered at the meeting.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ibrahim declared an interest in respect of agenda item 6 - Scrutiny of the Draft 5 year Medium Term Financial Strategy - Priority X – as her sister was an employee of Haringey Council in the Democratic Services team.

87. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

The Committee heard two deputations. The first deputation was made by Paul Burnham, Jacob Secker and Bob Lindsay-Smith of Haringey Defend Council Housing.
NOTED:

- The Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) would mean social cleansing, with seven council estates in Haringey included in the plan. Council tenants, leaseholders, people in temporary accommodation and local businesses would be affected, and had not been consulted adequately, or made aware of the consequences of the development vehicle for them.
- There was a viability gap in the proposals, which did not make economic sense.
- Haringey Defend Council Housing supported the proposal by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel that the HDV be halted.

In response to questions from the Committee it was noted that:

- A ballot should be carried out with every tenant, business and leaseholder affected by the HDV. Information provided needed to be simple, clear and truthful. This would not only provide a fair response and decision, but it would empower residents. As long as this ballot was conducted fairly then the decision would have to be accepted.
- Proper consultation needed to be carried out before a contract was signed with a preferred bidder. Residents needed to know what their housing rights would be under the new development plans, what community facilities would be available to replace the ones taken away, and this information needed to be provided before any contracts were signed.

The second deputation was made by David Bennie, Friends of St. Anns Library, and Joanna Bornat, Friends of Stroud Green Library, in relation to all libraries across the Borough. NOTED:

- The budget proposal was to cut library opening hours by 40%, despite previous assurances that there would be no library closures.
- There had been virtually no consultation on the proposals.
- Libraries were important to everyone in the Borough and crucial to the Council's equalities agenda. Cuts in library hours would reduce demand and increase the likelihood of full closures in the future.

In response to questions from the Committee it was noted that:

- It was not clear how the reductions in hours would be applied in each library.
- A reduction in opening hours would not just mean that people were unable to access libraries to borrow books, it would also affect people, such as job-seeker, who used libraries for community groups, for computer usage and for socialising. The proposed reduction would represent a false economy.

The Chair thanked all for attending.

Clerks note – the Chair varied the order of the agenda to take item 8 - Interim Report Governance Arrangements for Haringey Development Vehicle (From the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel) – as the next item of the meeting. The minutes follow the order of the agenda.

88. SCRUTINY OF THE DRAFT 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - PRIORITY X

Councillor Connor in the Chair.

Councillor Connor took the Committee through each of the proposals and asked for comments from the Committee and clarification from officers. NOTED:

- Legal Services – reduction in staffing and other related expenditure
The savings reduction was predicated on a reduction in demand on Legal Services as a whole. The expectation was that as demand for childrens and adult services fell, so would the demand for legal services.

The Committee noted the proposal, and that it was contingent on a reduction in demand, meaning it perhaps should be rated as 'amber' rather than 'green'.

- Audit and Risk Management – reduction in cost on the external audit contract
This proposal was based on the changing risk profile of the Council.

The Committee noted the proposal, and agreed that a note be provided for the Corporate Committee to seek its views on this reduction.

- Democratic Services – reduction in staffing
There would be a reduction in support to internal areas of the Council to ensure that the Committees would still be supported.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Shared Service Centre Business Support – reduction in staffing
There would be little or no impact on customers with this reduction, as this related to back-office staff and included more efficient practices.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Shared Service Centre – new delivery model for shared services
The Committee noted the proposal.

- Reduce opening hours in our six branch libraries to 36 hours per week
Following an outline by Councillor Vanier, the Committee noted that the Unions had been briefed on the proposals, and detailed consultation would be carried out with Unions and staff, along with the 'Friends' groups of the libraries, on the best use of hours for each branch if this proposal went ahead. There would be no lone working.
The Committee referred to the deputation made earlier in the meeting and agreed on the importance of libraries to the local community.

The Committee agreed to recommend that Cabinet did not agree to this proposal.

- Shared Service Offer for Customer Services
It was not possible to say what the impact would be to customers and residents until a detailed options appraisal had been carried out.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Senior Management Saving
Further information on this saving would shortly be provided in a report to the Council's Staffing and Remuneration Committee from the Chief Executive, but it would mean the deletion of one senior post at least.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Alexandra House – Decant

The proposal was to continue to vacate underused floors at Alexandra House and utilise underused space at River Park House, following a significant increase in rent at Alexandra House. There would be minimal impact to staff as the Council operated a clear desk / hot desk policy. In relation to accessibility requirements, Managers would be aware of their staff requirements and adjustments would be made where required.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Translation and Interpreting Service
There would be no impact on residents, as the service would still be provided by the new contract.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Closure of internal print room
The demand from Legal services on the print room would be reduced, as the service moved to scanning documents rather than printing. Proposals for providing Committee papers using software were currently being explored.

The Committee noted the report.

- Communications – reduction in staffing
There would be no reduction in service by not filling a vacant post, given changes in the ways of working.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Income generation – advertising and sponsorship
The figure given for income generation was net of the cost of the employee and the income generated could increase in the future.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Professional Development Centre
This was subject to a business case on a number of issues, and a full proposal would be provided to Cabinet for decision.

The Committee noted the proposal.

- Insurance
The Committee noted the proposal.

- Voluntary Severance Savings
The Committee noted the proposal.

RESOLVED that the report and proposals be noted, and that it be recommended to Cabinet that the proposal to reduce staffing at Haringey branch libraries be rejected.

89. DRAFT BUDGET SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Connor in the Chair.

The Committee noted the draft recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panels as set out in the agenda pack. It was noted that there had been further information requested in some areas, and that this would be received before the next Committee meeting on 30 January, where the final recommendations to Cabinet would be agreed.

90. INTERIM REPORT GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HARINGEY DEVELOPMENT VEHICLE (FROM THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL)

Councillor Ibrahim, as Chair of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, introduced the report as set out. NOTED:

- At the Scrutiny Café held at the start of the municipal year, there had been many issues raised around the Haringey Development Vehicle. It was agreed that a piece of scrutiny work on the proposed governance structures would be valuable. As part of the Panel's work, a number of evidence-gathering sessions had been held, along with visits to other authorities with an equivalent vehicle.
- Recommendation 1 (to halt the process) was based on the findings of the Panel that there was no evidence base in support of a development vehicle of the scale suggested and further scrutiny was needed.
- A point made in Recommendation 1 should be amended to clarify the Panel's concern.
- A number of recommendations around the governance arrangements had also been made, and the Panel hoped to see these implemented, as a minimum, if the Cabinet decided to proceed with the HDV.
- A number of officers had been involved in the scrutiny process, and they had provided clear and honest information to Members. Councillor Ibrahim wished to place on record her thanks to them, and in particular, to Martin Bradford, former Scrutiny Officer, for producing the report.

Councillor McNamara addressed the Committee and echoed Councillor Ibrahim's comments regarding the lack of evidence regarding development vehicles and the Panel felt that there were many questions that remained unanswered. In respect of the recommendation made by the Panel to halt the process, Councillor McNamara explained that this was not a rejection of the concept of development vehicles, and was not a reflection on the merit or demerit of potential developers. In order to carry out further scrutiny, the Panel required more detailed projections on the impact of the HDV, and the current timescale did not provide enough time to do this. He requested the Committee endorse the report and refer it to Cabinet for response.

RESOLVED that

- i. The report be noted;**
- ii. The recommendations as set out in section 7 of the report be agreed, with an amendment to recommendation 1(2) as follows – "There needs to be**

- further clarity on the role of officers joining a board and the role of councillors”; and
- iii. The report and recommendations be referred to Cabinet for consideration in February 2017.

91. FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted.

CHAIR: Councillor Charles Wright

Signed by Chair

Date