

MINUTES OF MEETING Strategic Planning Committee HELD ON Monday, 13th November, 2023, 7:00pm – 8:15pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Barbara Blake (Chair), Reg Rice (Vice-Chair), Nicola Bartlett, John Bevan, Cathy Brennan, George Dunstall, Scott Emery, Sean O'Donovan and Alexandra Worrell

ALSO ATTENDING: Kodi Sprott, Principal Committee Coordinator, Robbie McNaughton, Head of Development, Management and Enforcement, Rob Krzyszowski, Assistant Director for Planning, Building Standards and Sustainability, Bob McIver, Head of Building Control Services, Bryce Tubhall, The Head of Policy, Transport and Infrastructure Planning

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Ibrahim and Councillor Jameson.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS

There were no deputations/ petitions/ presentations/ questions.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED

To confirm and sign the minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 20th June a correct record.

7. PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL 2023/24 Q1-2 UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Planning, Building Standards and Sustainability introduced the report which provided an update on the work of the Planning and Building Control services for Quarter 1 to 2 which covered the period of September/October 2023.

Planning Cross Cutting Matters –

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

- It was noted by members that the 'Pathways to Planning' graduate scheme was a positive step forward. If successful it was intended to lead to further careers in planning and architecture. Members looked forward to meeting the upcoming graduates on the scheme.
- It was noted that the Council's action plan to help promote Diversity and Inclusion was launched. Subsequently officers within the planning, building and sustainability team are working on an action plan to encourage equality diversity and inclusion, including within recruitment. This was led by a staff group of volunteers. This group would be working to come up with actions on a more local level. Officers would update the Committee on this in due course.
- In relation to dealing with the backlog of applications. It was noted that the new Government scheme, Planning Skills Delivery Fund allowed planning teams to bid up to £100,000. It was noted that the fund could be used to help deal with any backlog via routes such as managed overtime or recruitment of additional staff.
- It was noted that the update on increased planning fees, had passed through parliament. This update allowed a 25% increase on smaller applications fees and 35% on major applications fees. That was the government's long-term approach and that would be index linked in line with inflation.

Development Management and Enforcement –

The Head of Development Management and Planning Enforcement introduced this section of the report.

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

- That the caseload increase was an issue but that had now levelled off. A decrease in the number of open cases was expected as the team was well resourced to deal with the cases. In terms of the PPA and outstanding money, this referred to the money that had been agreed to be paid but had not been paid yet. This was often set on milestones; officers would not record debt that they were owed in that figure. With fast track and priority applications, the additional income allowed the team to keep staffing levels and resource high. Officers were allocated work knowing they would have to prioritise the case.
- In terms of tackling back-log August was a quiet period, this was used as a 4-week block to tackle outstanding cases. A lot of applications are reliant on detailed discussions with consultees, on all those fronts there had been an increase in resource. It was noted that applications tend to increase around the Christmas period. The majority of the backlog consisted of smaller cases and this should continue to decrease. There was also an increase in end-to-end times and a lot of it could be post-committee. The Legal agreement process could be lengthy due to the COVID-19 hangover. There was a drop in major applications due to the impact of inflation on developers. It was noted that at present there were not many live projects or pre-applications. There was good work underway to raise the profile for investment in this area.

- In terms of additional performance figures officers monitored this closely, with built-in notifications to alert officers on reporting deadlines. The team worked under pressure, decisions were made robustly and performance targets were hit. Any further performance targets would not impact this.
- It was noted that there was difficulty in predicting planning overall yearly figures, the busier time was at Christmas time.
- With the introduction of increased planning fees, the government would be reducing the Planning Guarantee time from 26 to 16 weeks. Officers continued to monitor this closely and bringing this forward meant the window had narrowed. Officers would be bringing in new procedures and checks to subdue any substantial risk arising from the need for quicker decisions.
- There was a request for Committee members to visit a sheltered housing scheme

Planning Policy and Infrastructure –

The Head of Policy, Transport and Infrastructure Planning introduced the report.

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

- The Infrastructure Delivery Plan was a snapshot in time previously, officers wanted to make the new IDP a living document. There was a request to ensure younger and older people were engaged e.g. on youth facilities
- The Local Plan timescale was delayed, the limited resources within the team could have impacted this. Officers wanted the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to be on the leading edge and have sought to do a lot of the work in-house. Evidence based work provided by consultants wasn't always effective and doesn't always reflect the needs and aspirations of councils. The first engagement of the local plan was not a statutory requirement, but the team wanted to engage early. The Peer Review looked at timescales of the Local Plan; from this there would be improvements made.
- A fairer approach to allocation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was approved in 2020. The CIL rate was drastically different across the borough but this imbalance had been addressed. In terms of participatory budgeting, the teams were still in the process of understanding what this meant in Haringey.

Building Control –

The Head of Building Control Services introduced the report.

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

- Currently, anything over 18 metres could have a single staircase legally. The Secretary of State stated 'single staircase buildings are not inherently unsafe'. Therefore, schemes could progress without two staircases and the Government had backtracked on this stringent requirement during a transitional period. It was noted that there would be no planning policy basis to refuse a proposal where there was no second staircase if other appropriate fire engineering measures were sufficient. It was also explained to the committee that the planning policy requirements were wider than just looking at staircases, the other options for fire engineering measures were available and can be sufficient.
- The team currently has one trainee in place with a replacement for a second trainee being recruited to.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the dates of the next meeting was 20th February.

CHAIR: Councillor Barbara Blake

Signed by ChairCllr Blake.....

Date22/11/2023.....