

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2020, 7:00pm - 9:00pm**

## **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Khaled Moyeed (Chair), Dawn Barnes, Ruth Gordon, Yvonne Say and Daniel Stone**

### **1. FILMING AT MEETINGS**

Members noted that the meeting was being streamed live on the Council's website.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bob Hare.

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Daniel Stone.

### **3. URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS**

None.

### **6. MINUTES**

Referring to item 51 (Local Plan) of the minutes of the previous meeting, Cllr Gordon raised a number of matters arising:

- It had been stated that a Member Working Group would be set up to provide a 'sounding board' for developments on the new Local Plan. Asked for an update on this and on the process of reviewing the Local Plan, Rob Krzysowski, Interim AD for Planning, said that the Councillors on this group were the same as those on the Regulatory Committee and Planning sub-Committee because they have had the relevant training. There had been an all-Member briefing on the Local Plan review which will also have various stages of public consultation that will provide opportunities for all Members to feed into. He also confirmed that, through this process, there would be scope to make changes to policies

- on issues such as the affordable housing percentage and the child yield calculator while operating within national and regional parameters.
- Asked about the consultation on how funds raised through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would be spent, Rob Krzysowski noted that there had been a consultation in Feb/Mar 2020 on the distribution of the neighbourhood CIL. Following that there had been a decision to allocate neighbourhood CIL on projects reflective of a public consultation that took place in 2018. Information on the specific projects is publicly available on the CIL page of the Council's website. There was unlikely to be a consultation on Round 2 of CIL spend this year as most of the available CIL funds had been spent through Round 1.

Asked by Cllr Brabazon for further details about the child yield calculations referred to in his previous answer, Rob Krzysowski said that a previous paper to the Panel on this topic had set out actions which had now been implemented or were on track to being implemented. This included actions to use the updated GLA calculator rather than the older one which had been the source of concern from some Members. This had been actioned the previous summer and the updated calculator was now being used. The Council had also committed to using the most up to date calculator when drafting the new Local Plan. At national level, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Department for Education (DfE) have committed to producing a national child yield calculator. The Council wanted to ensure that this would be appropriate for use in Haringey and had recently had discussions with the Government on this. The Government was not on track with their original timetable to produce the calculator by the end of 2019 but the Council would continue to monitor this.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

## **7. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - HOUSING AND ESTATE RENEWAL**

Cllr Emine Ibrahim, Cabinet Member for Housing and Estate Renewal, responded to questions from the Panel on issues relating to her portfolio:

- Cllr Gordon asked for further details about the purchase of 29 homes at 500 White Hart Lane. Cllr Ibrahim said that this related to a Cabinet decision made some time ago and that, of the 29 homes, 6 of them were always going to be shared ownership properties, so only 23 of them were counted towards the Council's housing target. Her understanding was that this purchase was funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). A proposal to allow leaseholders from the Love Lane estate to be offered the first opportunity to purchase the shared ownership properties would shortly be considered by the Cabinet. However, the tenure of these 6 properties had not been changed as their shared ownership status had been determined by a Cabinet decision made quite some time previously. Cllr Ibrahim said that she would provide details to

the Panel of the date that this decision had previously been made. **(ACTION)** Asked by Cllr Gordon why these 6 homes, which would end up in the private sector, were being paid for through the HRA, Cllr Ibrahim said that the leaseholders would need to purchase their share of the equity so the Council would get the money back for any share of the properties obtained by the leaseholders.

- Cllr Brabazon said that, according to the original Council report on 500 White Hart Lane, the total cost of the Council's purchase of the 29 properties was approximately £4.5m, which averages out at around £150,000 per property. Asked if this was accurate and at what price they would now be valued at, Cllr Ibrahim said that she would need to refer to the relevant Cabinet reports for the exact figures.
- Cllr Say asked for reassurance that there was a procedure in place for the naming of buildings. Cllr Ibrahim said that there is a planning policy and procedure in place which is followed for such matters.
- Cllr Moyeed asked for details about work to support rough sleepers in the Borough during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Cllr Ibrahim said that she was proud of the work that had been done in this area, with the Council having met the Government's "Everybody In" challenge of accommodating all rough sleepers, including those who would not usually have been found to be in priority need. The Council had also developed a Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy to provide support to people who are not covered by the Council's existing statutory duty, including those who are not eligible for housing assistance due to their immigration status, even after the Government has reverted back to its previous guidance in this area.
- Asked by Cllr Moyeed about the Council's commitment to social rented properties, Cllr Ibrahim said that she and the Council remain strongly committed to social rented properties as they are the most affordable and secure type of tenure.
- Cllr Brabazon asked about a letter from March 2020 relating to High Road West that was recently published on Twitter. Cllr Ibrahim said that some of the information on the relevant Twitter feed was misleading and included some out of date information.
- Asked by Cllr Gordon about whether the consultation on changes to the Local Lettings Policy with regards to the Love Lane estate would include all Love Lane residents, Cllr Ibrahim confirmed that it would.

## **8. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

Robbie Erbmann, Assistant Director for Housing, introduced a report about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's Housing Delivery Programme.

He said that the Council had previously committed to a very ambitious programme of delivering 1,000 Council housing completions by 2022 and that, in order to meet that target, it would have been necessary for everything to go right. However, the onset of

the pandemic had adversely impacted on the programme in a number of ways including:

- Illnesses to a number of key staff;
- Migrating various procedures online from scratch;
- Reductions to availability within the supply chain;
- Suspension of construction work on a number of active sites;
- A significant shortage of building materials such as plaster;
- An exacerbation of labour market shortages;
- A reduction to the speed of construction work on site to around 60-70% due to social distancing;

The latest estimate was that the Council would achieve at least 1,000 'starts' by March 2022 and around 800 completions by May 2023. It may now not be possible to reach 1,000 completions until 2024. However, it was not yet known what the impact of a possible second wave of Covid-19 would have on this timetable.

Robbie Erbmann and Peter O'Brien responded to questions from the Panel as follows:

- Asked by Cllr Barnes about whether the ambitious housing target was realistic and whether the impact of Brexit had been factored in to the revised timetable, Robbie Erbmann said that the target was necessarily ambitious and had mobilised resources but that everything would have needed to go right to meet it. He added that the current impact from Brexit is factored into the plans though there is a wide degree of uncertainty over that impact which would need to be closely monitored.
- Asked by Cllr Gordon whether there was a robust and transparent system of project management of the projects within the Housing Delivery Programme, Robbie Erbmann said the Council had a number of experienced project managers from the local government and housing associations sectors leading the projects. There was a team of 18 with more being recruited to help deliver the projects and he was confident that the skills and the systems required to deliver the programme was in place. He added that they had looked at two points arising from an audit that had been carried out earlier in the year on reporting and on financial management. A new system of software had been introduced and embedded into the management processes along with a new reporting system. Cllr Gordon queried comments made in the auditor's report which could only give limited assurance that there had been the appropriate monitoring procedures in place due to the speed of the programme. Robbie Erbmann said that the report had identified areas for improvement, all of which had been actioned.
- Asked by Cllr Gordon for an update about the delivery of new homes at Broadwater Farm, Peter O'Brien reported that architects and viability consultants had recently been appointed and more detailed consultation with residents was planned. This consultation process had also been adversely

affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and it had been decided that consultation would not have been appropriate during the lockdown. However, a mixed approach to consultation had already been developed prior to this, including both face-to-face and online engagement. The Council was therefore assessing options on engaging with people who struggle with online communication, perhaps for example by organising physical events with smaller numbers of people, though this would create some challenges. A lot of innovation was happening across the country to address this kind of problem including new interactive tools such as virtual rooms that people could use instead of attending a physical event.

- Asked by Cllr Stone about how the impact of Covid-19 on the Housing Delivery Programme compared with other London Boroughs, Robbie Erbmann said that the overall planned trajectory had been quicker than other Boroughs and that even those that also had ambitious targets had started their delivery plans earlier. However, in general, all Boroughs were in the same boat with the timetables of their programmes being elongated. The GLA's Affordable Housing Grant programme had already been extended by another year in recognition of this.
- Cllr Moyeed asked for further details about the Council's approach to zero-carbon developments given that the Edith Road development in Bounds Green was described in the report as the Council's first zero-carbon development. Robbie Erbmann said that the Council would get as close as possible to zero-carbon on as many sites as possible but that zero-carbon can't always be achieved in every scenario. Various methods were being looked at to achieve carbon reductions for the projects being planned, including through the heating methods for example, and this was a top priority for the team.
- Asked by Cllr Moyeed about the overall mix of homes, who had noted that the first four-bedroom homes in the borough at social rent in over a decade were planned at Mount View Court in Harringay ward, Robbie Erbmann said that the current programme included around 26% family housing and there was an ambition to provide the 3-bed and 4-bed family housing that residents need.
- Asked by Cllr Brabazon about the viability of the programme and the delivery partners given the current economic circumstances, Robbie Erbmann said that there were some negative signs relating to the HRA including for example a decline in rent collection, though it was hoped that this would be a temporary issue. However, the negative impact of these factors was outweighed by the reduction of the interest rate through the Public Works Loans Board so viability was currently looking quite positive. In terms of procurement, while more due diligence may be required in selecting financially viable partners, there was still quite a lot of work in the sector so the risk was expected to be limited.
- Asked by Cllr Brabazon about the funding position relating to the Love Lane Estate, Peter O'Brien said that primary focus of the Council's efforts has been on securing a funding package from the GLA which would enable the delivery

of 500 Council homes through the High Road West scheme. Discussions were ongoing and it was hoped that more information on this would be available later in the year.

## **9. HOMELESSNESS UPDATE**

Robbie Erbmann, Assistant Director for Housing, introduced a report about the Council's approach to rough sleeping since March 2020. Due to concerns about the significant risk that rough sleepers could be at as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) made a request to local authorities to accommodate anyone who was, or who was at risk of, rough sleeping. This became known as the "Everybody In" directive and the Council had worked with Homes for Haringey (HfH) and partners across the Borough to deliver this. Since March 2020 the Council had provided accommodation for over 700 individuals, only around 50 of which would have been considered to be in priority need. This peaked at around 400 people at any one time. As well as providing accommodation, the Council also provided wrap-around support services and so this had provided an opportunity to get people who had been rough sleeping for a long time into support programmes. About 400 of the people that had been accommodated had now found a long-term solution either through the help provided by the Council or by making their own arrangements.

As the Government funding for this policy began to be reduced, the Council introduced a Rough Sleeping Discretion Policy which ensures that anyone at risk with vulnerabilities to Covid would be accommodated. This was more generous than the statutory policy that was followed previously.

Around 235 individuals were now being accommodated and the Council was in the process of trying to find longer-term solutions for these people. One initiative towards this is the Ermine Road Modular Project which would involve acquiring 39 modular housing units. These are self-contained homes with their own bathrooms, kitchens and living areas brought together with multi-disciplinary support services. In addition to rough sleepers there were also around 3,100 households in Haringey in temporary accommodation. The number of families approaching the Council as homeless had reduced by around 34% during the pandemic due to the temporary ban on evictions, though this was due to expire on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Looking to the future, analysis suggested that there could be 2,062 households in Haringey at risk of homelessness, of which 1,452 live in the private rented sector. Of these, around half of these households are families, suggesting that around 700 families could be at risk of homelessness when the ban on evictions is lifted. However, were this to happen, it could be quite a slow process and it was expected that the Council would be able to cope with the demand.

Robbie Erbmann and Denise Gandy, Director of Housing Demand at Homes for Haringey (HfH), responded to questions from the Panel as follows:

- Asked by Cllr Moyeed whether recent events would have helped towards meeting the Council's existing commitment to end rough sleeping by 2022, Robbie Erbmann said that the work had undoubtedly helped to get people off the streets who had been there for a long time. However, it was currently difficult to map out the future as it was not known what the impact of the economic crisis would be and what level of government support there would be.
- Asked by Cllr Gordon about how the Council would address the issues resulting from a potential second wave of Covid-19 and a lifting of the ban on evictions at the same time, Robbie Erbmann emphasised that the 700 families referred to previously were only identified as being at risk of homelessness but they were not in the process of being made homeless. Denise Gandy said that around 260 families were going through the eviction process immediately prior to the lockdown but that this all went on hold due to the ban. It was now expected that this process would play out over a much longer time period, probably peaking in the spring of 2021, due to differing notice periods. In preparation for this, the 700 at-risk families that had been identified had been written to, in collaboration with the Citizens Advice Bureaux, in the hope of being able to see them early before their situation reaches crisis point.
- Asked by Cllr Stone about ongoing support for people with no recourse to public funds, Denise Gandy said that a dedicated Move On resource had been appointed to work with the 80 households with no recourse to public funds. A lot of this activity was directed towards helping people to resolve their immigration status where possible and there had been some limited success with this so far. Where this is not possible it would be necessary to work with partners on a charitable response.

## 10. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Cllr Moyeed introduced the Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme for 2020/21 noting that the High Road West scrutiny review had been suspended due to the pandemic but that it was expected to resume later in the year. A number of priority issues for future meetings of the Panel were also included in the Work Programme.

Panel Members suggested additional items to be added to the list of priority issues:

- Maintenance service level agreements. This was suggested by Cllr Barnes who said that there had been incidents where services hadn't been carried out within a certain period of time resulting in accidents or problems for residents. It was agreed that this should be added to the list of priority issues. **(ACTION)**
- An examination of the number of empty homes in the Borough and how this is tracked by the Council. This was suggested by Cllr Gordon and it was agreed that this should be added to the list of priority issues. **(ACTION)**

- An update to provide details on how many local residents had taken up offers that were in place with some of the developments in Tottenham Hale to have the first option to purchase properties. This was suggested by Cllr Gordon and it was agreed that this could be raised during the next Question session with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Regeneration. **(ACTION)**

**11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020
- Tues 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020
- Tues 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar 2021

CHAIR: Councillor Khaled Moyeed

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....