

## NOTICE OF MEETING

# HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL

**Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021, 6.30 pm – MS Teams meeting (view it [here](#))**

**Members:** Councillors Ruth Gordon (Chair), Dawn Barnes, Zena Brabazon, Isidoros Diakides, Makbule Gunes, Bob Hare and Yvonne Say

**Co-optees/Non Voting Members:**

Quorum: 3

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

Please note that this meeting may be filmed or recorded by the Council for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site or by anyone attending the meeting using any communication method. Although we ask members of the public recording, filming or reporting on the meeting not to include the public seating areas, members of the public attending the meeting should be aware that we cannot guarantee that they will not be filmed or recorded by others attending the meeting. Members of the public participating in the meeting (e.g. making deputations, asking questions, making oral protests) should be aware that they are likely to be filmed, recorded or reported on.

By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

The chair of the meeting has the discretion to terminate or suspend filming or recording, if in his or her opinion continuation of the filming, recording or reporting would disrupt or prejudice the proceedings, infringe the rights of any individual or may lead to the breach of a legal obligation by the Council.

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

### 3. **URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair will consider the admission of any late items of urgent business (late items will be considered under the agenda item where they appear. New items will be dealt with as noted below).

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

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a prejudicial interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered:

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, and
- (ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must withdraw from the meeting room.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Register of Members' Interests or the subject of a pending notification must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal interests and prejudicial interests are defined at Paragraphs 5-7 and Appendix A of the Members' Code of Conduct.

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

To consider any requests received in accordance with Part 4, Section B, Paragraph 29 of the Council's Constitution.

**6. MINUTES (PAGES 1 - 14)**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

**7. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - PLANNING**

An opportunity to question the Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Matt White, on developments within his portfolio.

**8. HOUSING DELIVERY PROGRAMME (PAGES 15 - 22)**

To consider reports on:

- The size of new properties in the Housing Delivery Programme by the number of bedrooms.
- Woodside Avenue and the Cranwood Housing Development Site (deferred from meeting in November 2020).

**9. ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY UPDATE (PAGES 23 - 26)**

To receive an update on recent developments relating to the Council's Accommodation Strategy.

**10. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items admitted at item 3 above.

## **11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Dates of Panel meetings in 2021/22 to be determined.

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Monday, 22 February 2021

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## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2020, 6.30pm - 10.15 pm**

### **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Ruth Gordon (Chair), Dawn Barnes, Zena Brabazon, Isidoros Diakides, Makbule Gunes, Bob Hare and Yvonne Say**

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

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

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

No apologies were received from Panel Members.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Emine Ibrahim, Cabinet Member for Housing and Estate Renewal, Cllr Matt White, Cabinet Member for Planning and Corporate Services and Sean McLaughlin, Managing Director of Homes for Haringey (HfH).

Cllr Diakides expressed concern that two of the three Cabinet Members whose portfolios related to the Panel's remit were not present for the scrutiny of the budget. He also expressed disappointment not to be able to question the Managing Director of Homes for Haringey as there were relevant issues of concern relating to the funding arrangements between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

Cllr Adje, Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategic Regeneration, noted that Cllr White was unable to attend for medical reasons and that Cllr Ibrahim had another engagement. He also said that there had not been a specific request from the Panel for all three Cabinet Members to attend the meeting.

Cllr Gordon emphasised the role of the Panel in scrutinising Cabinet Members and noted that the meeting had been in the diary for some time. The importance of the attendance of Cabinet Members for the budget scrutiny meeting were reiterated by Cllr Barnes, Cllr Brabazon, Cllr Hare and Cllr Say. Cllr Brabazon suggested that a further budget scrutiny meeting should be scheduled so that the Cabinet Members could attend and respond to questions from the Panel. David Joyce, Director for

Housing, Regeneration and Planning said that the senior officers present would be able to respond to questions from the Panel and that, on the point about representation from Homes for Haringey, the primary focus of the budget scrutiny would be on the Council's budget.

Cllr Gordon proposed that a separate meeting be organised with the Cabinet Members in attendance so that the Panel's questions could be answered and this was agreed by the Panel.

**RESOLVED – That a request be made for a meeting to be arranged where Cabinet Members respond to questions from the Panel on budget issues.**

**3. URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

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

None.

**6. MINUTES**

Cllr Diakides noted that under the Work Programme Update item in the draft minutes of the previous meeting he was recorded as suggesting that the Panel should consider funding models relating to the ALMO and the HRA at a future meeting. He said that this in fact related to the General Fund and the HRA. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that this would be corrected in the final version of the minutes.

With this amendment made, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

Cllr Gordon noted that there were a number of action points from the previous meeting which would be followed up with responses circulated in January. Cllr Diakides enquired about the use of an action tracker and the Scrutiny Officer confirmed that an action tracker spreadsheet was used to record actions and would be circulated to the Panel when the responses had been collected.

**RESOLVED – That, following one correction under item 11, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved as an accurate record.**

**RESOLVED – That an action tracker including responses to recent action points be circulated to all Panel Members in January 2021.**

**7. SCRUTINY OF THE 2021/22 DRAFT BUDGET / 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2021/22 - 2025/26)**

John O’Keefe, Head of Capital and Major Projects, introduced the report on the Council’s draft budget for 2021/22 and 5-Year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2021/22 – 2025/26 and proposals relating to the Panel’s remit, highlighting the following points:

- That a number of revenue and capital proposals were being put forward for the Panel’s consideration.
- That as of February 2020, the financial position had been for a budget reduction of £1.9m in 2021/22 and of £3.1m in 2022/23. However, by December 2020, the financial position was now for a required budget reduction of £17.0m in 2021/22 and of £10.041m in 2022/23.
- Net savings of £11.6m had been identified for 2021/22.
- £5.4m of reserves would be used to balance the budget for 2021/22.
- Significant risks with the budget still remained, including the impact of Covid, Brexit, planned savings not being delivered and a lack of clarity on the level of government support beyond 2021/22.

David Joyce, Director of Housing, Regeneration & Planning, provided some further details on the savings proposals:

- The overall revenue budget for Housing, Regeneration & Planning was relatively small compared to other departments. The majority of the funding came from alternative sources such as work under capital, work charged to the Housing Revenue Account and work funded by income such as planning and building control or through grants.
- The Housing, Regeneration and Planning department had a strong record of delivery and had a continued ambition to deliver services and projects such as new Council homes and investment in town centres. The intention was therefore to make savings through income and not by reducing activity. The majority of the savings proposals resulted from the cross-cutting Property Rationalisation work.
- The revenue savings for 2021/22 amounted to just over £1m:
  - **HO101:** Housing Team Salaries – Increase HRA contribution (£274k)
  - **HO102:** HfH taking over the lease of PSL properties on their expiry (£209k)
  - **EC101:** Additional Recharge to Housing Services (£300k)
  - **EC102:** Additional Planning income from introducing new charges (£200k)
  - **EC103:** Reduction in Energy Consumption on corporate buildings (£50k)
- The new capital investment items were listed as follows:
  - Housing (509): CPO – Empty Homes
  - Economy (404): Good Economy Recovery Plan

- Economy (473): 551b High Road (part of Enterprising Tottenham High Road scheme)
- Economy (453): New workspace scheme at Stoneleigh Road car park
- Economy (454): HALS Improvement Programme
- Economy (455): Replacement Cloud based IT solutions for Planning, Building Control & Land Charges

Cllr Ruth Gordon then introduced questions on Housing issues:

- Cllr Diakides commented on the relationship between the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the General Fund noting that around half of the revenue savings simply involved transferring money from one to the other. He acknowledged the reassurances that this approach was legally sound but said that this was more of a political issue impacting on the long-term viability of the Borough's Council housing and that he was concerned about loading more costs onto the HRA. He said that arguments could be made for costs relating to temporary accommodation or communal open spaces to be met from the General Fund. David Joyce responded that the charges to the HRA are governed by legislation and accounting codes of practice and also did not affect the HfH management fee. He said that this involved appropriately charging the HRA for activities including the building of 1,000 new Council homes and the acquisition of Right to Buy properties that would ultimately benefit the HRA by generating rent and reducing overcrowding. He added that the temporary accommodation budget would continue to be funded through the General Fund and that the saving outlined in the agenda pack related only to the transferring of the management of private leases to HfH to enable the charging of higher rents (paid through Housing Benefit). Cllr Diakides responded that the Broad Lane Square project was originally going to be funded through the General Fund but a decision had then been made to fund this through the HRA so there were choices involved. David Joyce said that questions over charges were not always clear cut, including in the example referred to, but he added that advice on the legal framework and from finance colleagues were sought on such issues in order to reach a view. However, he said that the basis of the savings outlined in the agenda pack was clear given the advice that had been received. In response to a further question from Cllr Diakides, he said that that following a development where the Council is the freeholder, private leasehold units remain as assets within the HRA. Asked whether the HfH Board had been consulted on the savings proposals, David Joyce said that the new homes programme was run from within the Council so it was Council business, but added that the Department worked closely with HfH including, for example, on the specifications of new properties.
- Cllr Gordon asked for further explanation on the HfH management fee of £41.15m and the Other Costs for GF Services of £4.357m listed on Table 9.3 on page 72 of the agenda pack. David Joyce explained that the management fee is the amount charged to the Council by HfH to run the housing management services, including rent collection, repairs and leaseholder services. He stressed that this management fee was unaffected by the savings outlined in the agenda pack as these related to other unrelated areas of work.

- Kaycee Ikegwu, Head of Finance & Business Partnerships, said that 'Other Costs for GF Services' related to recharges from the General Fund for services provided to the HRA.
- Cllr Brabazon asked about a point raised in the presentation about risks which included the possibility of the planned savings not being delivered. She said that the savings tracker on page 242 of the Cabinet papers from December 2020 showed shortfalls in savings achieved that were not shown in the savings tracker provided to the Panel. This included a shortfall of £326k in 2020/21 for item HO1 (Temporary Accommodation Reduction Plan). She asked for clarification on the impact on the budget when savings were not achieved. David Joyce said that unachieved savings were clearly important as they added to the scale of the savings challenge in subsequent years and so additional savings measures would then be required. However, the figures reported were from around month 6 of 2020/21, so there was still some time remaining to make further progress on the savings. Kaycee Ikegwu added that the savings gap for 2020/21 was less than the savings proposed for delivery this year, but the impact of Covid had put more pressure on this and increased the risk of the required savings not being met. John O'Keefe added that at the end of the year there would be an outturn report looking at the financial outcomes across the Council and mitigations could then be put in place. Any savings that had not been achieved would be rolled forward into the next version of the MTFS the following year.
  - Cllr Hare commented that properties acquired from a developer would be more expensive than those built by the Council. He asked how long it typically takes to reach the break-even point on these properties and also whether the properties acquired were chosen because they met the Council's requirements or whether they were mainly properties that the developer found difficult to sell. David Joyce noted that the acquisition of properties were part of the HRA business plan, so did not relate to any of the specific budget proposals being put before the Panel, but said that care was taken to ensure that the properties acquired were those that fit the Council's needs. He added that the price of acquired properties varied across different schemes so it wasn't necessarily the case that they would cost a fixed amount more than Council-built properties. Cllr Gordon said that, in her view, if the cost of acquisitions from developers was higher than the additional borrowing required, this meant that this query was relevant to the budget discussion. Cllr Gordon said that her understanding was that the cost to the Council of building homes on Council land was around £200k per unit whereas some recent acquisitions from private developers had cost around £350k per unit and asked how this extra cost could be justified. David Joyce said that the HRA Business Plan, which sets out both acquisition and new delivery, showed that the overall programme was affordable. A whole range of factors impacted on the costs of individual units and the viability of a specific scheme and so assessments needed to be made on a scheme-by-scheme basis to build the overall business plan. Acquisitions were valued by the Property Team in order to ensure value for money. He added that the combination of both acquisition and direct delivery properties was necessary in order to maximise the stock of Council homes. He also said that some of the acquisitions were properties that had previously been designated as shared

- ownership, which there was a demand for, but as the need for homes for social rent was so acute it had been determined that acquiring them for this purpose was justified. Asked whether sufficient family-sized housing was being acquired, David Joyce said that a lot of family-sized housing was being built in the programme overall and at acquired sites, noting that at the Rosa Luxemburg building which was under construction, a number of ground floor units were being converted to family-sized accommodation adapted to be suitable for severely disabled children. Cllr Diakides commented that the valuations alone could not ensure value for money and that the checks and balances of scrutiny, audit and standards were also required.
- Cllr Barnes asked about the figures provided in Table 9.4 on page 73 of the agenda pack (Draft HRA 5 Year Capital Programme) including:
    - What contingency had been applied to the figures for the New Homes Build Programme relating to the possible risks associated with Brexit. David Joyce said that contingency for this was already built into the schemes on site and that some contractors had already stockpiled the required building materials for example. He acknowledged that contingency had yet to be built into other schemes where contractors had not yet been appointed and so this was a risk that would need to be monitored as disruption was possible.
    - What confidence there was in the value for money in the purchase of equipment under the figures for Fire Safety, as the cost of products such as fire doors could vary considerably, and what contingency has been applied to the figures for Fire Safety given the uncertainty about future regulation relating to cladding. David Joyce said that the HRA business plan included an ongoing plan for fire safety where it was anticipated that more investment would be required in the first three years due to a raft of new regulations expected following the Grenfell fire and this was reflected in the figures in Table 9.4.
    - Why the figure for Market Sales Receipts was zero in 2022/23 but not for any of the other years. Kaycee Ikegwu explained that no schemes were expected to make contributions in 2022/23 due to the timing of completions.
  - Referring to paragraph 9.2 on page 66 of the agenda pack which related to the setting of housing rents, Cllr Diakides noted that the rent increases appeared to be lower than previously stated and asked what impact this had on the viability of the HRA. Kaycee Ikegwu said that this was because rent levels were set by Government and not the Council. He said that the rent increase allowed by the Government was set by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% and as the CPI at September 2020 was 0.5%, the Council could not raise rents by any more than 1.5% in 2021/22. In terms of the impact on viability, he said that the drop in inflation also had compensatory effects on the HRA which balanced this out, such as the reduction in the cost of borrowing for building. He also noted that the HRA's financial plan was prudent in planning for lower CPI rates than forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility so he had confidence that the plan was robust. Cllr Gordon then asked for further explanation on the capital investment referred to in paragraph 9.1.6 on page 66 of the agenda pack. Kaycee Ikegwu referred the Panel to page 73 of the agenda pack, noting that

the figures for Existing Stock Investment (Haringey Standard) were heavier in the earlier years. Paragraph 9.1.7 referred to the importance of rent collection in the context of the pressure of this heavy capital investment. The surplus income from the rents is used to help fund capital work, as detailed in the 'Revenue Contributions to Capital' section of Table 9.3 (Draft HRA 5-Year Revenue Budget) on page 72 of the agenda pack.

- Asked by Cllr Brabazon and Cllr Gordon about the slippage/underspends in capital projects, David Joyce said that the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of capital projects had been substantial and was the main reason for this. A lot of work was still continuing however, such as at Osborne Grove nursing home and on the acquisition of properties by the Community Benefit Society.
- Cllr Brabazon asked about the impact of the Mayor of London's new affordable homes guidance which specified that demolitions were not supported. David Joyce said that this approach would apply to the prospectus for the next affordable housing fund, whereas existing schemes such as the Love Lane/High Road West scheme, were funded through the current affordable housing programme. The new guidance could impact on future schemes, though the detail of the new guidance did specify some flexibility that could be applied. Asked when the new guidance would come into effect and how this could impact on the High Road West scheme, Peter O'Brien said that the funding from the affordable housing programme originally expired in March 2022, but this had now been extended by 12 months. Negotiations with the GLA had been continuing over the High Road West scheme and a position was close to being agreed. Announcements on this would take place at the appropriate time followed by a ballot of residents.

The Panel considered each individual savings proposal as follows:

### HO101 – Housing Team Salaries – Increase HRA contribution

David Joyce explained that this proposal involved charging salaries to the HRA. The HfH management fee was unaffected by this and it involved the Housing team doing more work and charging the HRA appropriately for certain types of activity, such as the delivery of more Council homes, which would result in long-term benefits for the HRA.

Cllr Diakides commented that, while he had no objections to the procedures that had led to this change, there were wider political concerns about the relationship between the HRA and the General Fund on which he would like to see more scrutiny work.

Cllr Brabazon suggested that, given the concerns about the pressures on the HRA, a caveat could be added that there should be transparency and monitoring over the charging of these salaries to the HRA to demonstrate that the proportion of officer time charged related to social housing and benefitted the tenants that pay into the HRA.

David Joyce said that there were checks and balances on this and the amount of officer time used on the Housing Programme would be kept under review. Kaycee Ikegwu added that the Finance team asks questions about the proportion of officer time spent on HRA activities and, where this is not clear cut, legal advice was sought. Auditors also examined this and asked for evidence where appropriate and their reports were placed in the public domain. Cllr Brabazon said that the key point was that there should be clear monitoring and apportionment of time and that there had now been assurances on this from officers.

### HO102 – HfH taking over the lease of PSL properties on their expiry

David Joyce explained that this proposal related to the way that residents were placed in temporary accommodation. When the Council placed residents in temporary accommodation this was funded from the General Fund and there was a limit, set by Government, in the level of rent that could be charged which was paid by the Housing Benefit of the residents. Other parties were able to charge higher amounts, so by transferring the leases to HfH they could charge higher levels of rent and because this is paid by the Housing Benefit of the residents, this does not financially impact the residents.

Cllr Brabazon noted that PSLs were to be transferred to HfH but that, according to the savings tracker, PSLs were also being transferred to the Community Benefit Society (CBS) and queried how these were both happening. She also asked why landlord incentives were required, as referred to in page 118 of the agenda pack. David Joyce said that the PSLs were being transferred into the management of HfH but remained within the General Fund. PSLs were also being transferred into the CBS as, in both cases, this provided greater flexibility in the rents that can be charged. David Joyce agreed to supply a more detailed written response on the point about the landlord incentives. **(ACTION)**

Cllr Say queried the point on page 89 of the agenda pack which stated that “*rent increases will be met from increased benefits and will have no effect on tenants themselves*” commented that it would be more likely to trap tenants on benefits and would make it harder to earn enough to pay a higher rent when returning to work.

Cllr Gordon noted from the implementation details on page 89 of the agenda pack that the project was already underway including the recruitment of staff. David Joyce noted that the transferring of PSLs was something that the Council already does and that this was a proposal to make further savings by doing more of it. In response to a question about the staffing for this work, Simon Eversley, Housing Strategy & Commissioning Manager, said that this included staff in both HfH and within his own team administering the scheme. He added that his position and that of the person lead monitoring it were interim posts. Cllr Gordon expressed concern about this and noted discussions in previous years about reducing the consultancy budget and suggested that a caveat on this point be added to the Panel’s recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Cllr Brabazon said that the transferring of PSLs in previous budgets related to the CBS rather than HfH and that it was unclear how much of the previously agreed savings had actually been achieved so she felt that more clarity was needed.

Cllr Diakides expressed concerns that the proposal could involve more costs being shifted to the HRA via the HfH management fee.

### EC101 – Additional Recharge to Housing Services

David Joyce explained that this proposal was a recharge for the work that the Property Team does, such as valuing properties that the Council was buying back through Right to Buy receipts for example. He emphasised that there was a clear budgetary framework around what could be charged to the HRA and that only appropriate charges were made.

Christine Addison, AD for Capital Projects and Property, said that historically the Property team had not charged the HRA or the Housing team for the work done on their behalf, though charges were made to the Regeneration team. The Property team had been involved in a substantial amount of work on acquisitions relating to Housing Programme. She added that the finance team oversaw the rules that specified what could be charged to the HRA but the point was that these charges had not previously been made.

### EC102 – Additional Planning income from introducing new charges

David Joyce explained that this proposal involved driving up income in the Planning service through raising pre-application fees to developers. A benchmarking exercise had demonstrated that Haringey Council was not charging as much for this service as some other London Boroughs.

Cllr Say queried how this could be affected by the government's reported plans to abolish Section 106 agreements. She also noted that the delivery confidence on this proposal was only 3 on the 5-point scale. Rob Krzyszowski, AD for Planning, acknowledged that this was mentioned in the Government's recent White Paper but said that the plans were not very detailed at this stage and that, even if the plans did go ahead, it would take at least a couple of years and there would still be other forms of financial contributions towards affordable housing that could be used. The level of risk was therefore considered to be low.

Asked about the role of the Carbon Management team in this proposal, Rob Krzyszowski said that the income target related to the Planning team, but that the Carbon Management team's advice was sometimes drawn upon in relation to planning applications. While this was a relatively small proportion of the target, the proposal overall was to charge developers appropriately for the officer time provided.

Asked by Cllr Brabazon how much of the Planning service's budget was funded by fees, Rob Krzyszowski said that just over half of the budget came from income which included fees while the rest came from general revenue. In the first few months of the year, income from fees had been lower than expected because of the impact of Covid

reducing the number of planning applications. However, this had picked up again in recent months and fee income had recovered to pre-Covid levels.

Asked by Cllr Gordon about the current vacancy for Head of Planning Policy and Transport Planning, Rob Krzyszowski said that this was his normal role but that he was currently acting up as AD for Planning. The AD role was currently being advertised and so he would return to his previous position when this was filled. Asked about timescales for this, David Joyce said that the recruitment process would begin in January. He added that he was confident in the Planning service's ability to deliver these proposals and noted that it was a high-performing service and had recently been nominated for the LGA Team of the Year. In response to a question from Cllr Gordon, Rob Krzyszowski confirmed that the Building Control team was currently fully staffed.

Asked by Cllr Hare how Tree Protection Order (TPO) work was being funded, Rob Krzyszowski said that this was from fees and noted that his team were working closely with colleagues in Environment and Neighbourhoods to recruit another officer, so work in this area should shortly be better resourced. In response to a question from Cllr Diakides, he confirmed that the intention was for this work to be done in-house rather than through the previous arrangements with Islington Council.

#### EC103 – Reduction in Energy Consumption on corporate buildings

David Joyce explained that, as part of this proposal, the Sustainability Team had been looking at buildings across the corporate estate to identify areas where short-term capital investment could reduce energy costs, such as by replacing boilers or improving insulation.

Asked by Cllr Gordon whether this proposal was achievable, Rob Krzyszowski said that he believed that it was and that by reducing energy bills, and assuming that energy costs were likely to rise further in future, this would also create further savings in the future. Asked about staffing, he confirmed that this would involve recruiting a project manager and while this may be possible to be done internally, decisions on resourcing this had not yet been made.

Asked by Cllr Gordon about the risks and mitigations on this item, Rob Krzyszowski said that, as the detailed work on the buildings had not yet been done, there were possible unforeseen circumstances that could have an impact on costs/savings but that this was not out of the ordinary for this kind of work.

The Panel considered the new capital investment items as follows:

#### Housing (509): CPO – Empty Homes

Cllr Say noted that CPOs were known to be a slow and laborious process. John O'Keefe acknowledged that it was a slow process but noted that the regulations on this required the Council to be able to show that it had the resources to conclude a CPO. This increased budget would therefore enable an increased number of potential CPO processes to proceed at one time.

Cllr Gordon said that, as of 2019, she understood there to be 996 long-term empty homes in Haringey, which had increased to 1,355 homes by 2020 and queried whether these were new build homes or older properties. David Joyce said that the vast majority of these were homes within the existing housing stock. Cllr Gordon asked what was driving the increase in empty homes and whether any Council Tax enforcement action was taking place. Cllr Diakides commented that the threat of a CPO was often a prominent mechanism to incentivise action on empty homes. Cllr Gordon requested that further written information be provided to show the breakdown of the empty homes (in terms of new-build and existing housing stock) and what kind of remedial action (such as increased Council Tax rates) was possible and had been taking place before reaching the CPO stage. **(ACTION)** David Joyce commented that the Council was ambitious about bringing empty homes back into use and that CPOs were an important tool in achieving that. It was also important to be prepared to follow through on the threat of CPO use hence the need for the increased budget.

In response to a question from Cllr Gordon, John O’Keefe clarified that the increase of £5m to this part of the budget would be in addition to the base budget of just over £2m which could be carried forward, subject to Cabinet approval in June 2021.

#### Economy (404): Good Economy Recovery Plan

David Joyce said that this bid involved investment in employment support and town centres. The Panel did not ask any questions on this item.

#### Economy (473): 551b High Road (part of Enterprising Tottenham High Road scheme)

David Joyce explained that this bid was part of a scheme that would deliver important workspace in an existing Council building.

In response to a question from Cllr Brabazon, Peter O’Brien clarified that the focus of this proposal related to Potters House and not Morrison Yard, though there would be wider public realm improvements. It was further clarified that Potters House was owned by the Council while Morrison Yard was leased by the Council.

#### Economy (453): New workspace scheme at Stoneleigh Road car park

David Joyce said that this bid included capital investment to develop employment space and also deliver Council homes on a number of Council-owned car parks. The Council homes aspect would be appropriately funded through the HRA while the employment aspects would be funded through the General Fund.

Cllr Brabazon expressed reservations about this proposal and suggested that it required further examination, noting that it related to several car parks and that parking would be necessary to support any future improvements to Tottenham High Road.

Economy (454): Haringey Adult Learning Service (HALS) Improvement Programme

David Joyce said that this bid was to invest in an improvement programme for adult learning which would include improvements to online teaching but also to the classroom environment. The Panel did not ask any questions on this item.

Economy (455): Replacement Cloud based IT solutions for Planning, Building Control & Land Charges

David Joyce said that this bid would address problems with the IT system used by the Planning, Building Control & Land Charges team which was out of date and suffered from multiple outages. The proposal was to move to a cloud-based system which would provide a better service for customers and provide real-time information to residents. The Panel did not ask any questions on this item.

On other budget related issues, the Panel made the following additional comments:

- Cllr Hare asked why the proportion of HMOs brought under licence was still low according to the savings tracker on page 117 of the agenda pack (Item PL1). David Joyce said that this item actually fell under the responsibility Environment and Neighbourhoods Department and so it would be necessary to obtain a response from the relevant team. **(ACTION)** After some further discussion it was established that while this item was not under the operational responsibility of Housing, Regeneration and Planning, it was included in the Cabinet portfolio of Cllr Emine Ibrahim.
- Cllr Diakides noted that the revenue proposals mainly involved either increases in fees or the transferring of funds from one budget to another. He proposed that, in approving the proposals with relevant caveats attached, the Panel should require a clear process of assessing the relationship between the HRA and General Fund and of the long-term viability of the HRA to ensure that there would be sufficient funds for maintaining Haringey housing estates in future. David Joyce reiterated that the proposals were all based on the HRA Business Plan which was balanced, affordable and based on prudent assumptions. Cllr Diakides said that there hadn't been any consultation with residents on this. Cllr Gordon indicated that the points made by Panel Members on the HRA would be raised at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- Cllr Gordon noted that reductions to the consultancy budget had been discussed at previous scrutiny meetings and questioned why this had not been included in the budget proposals this year. She suggested that concerns about this should be raised at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- Cllr Brabazon proposed a recommendation to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that more clarity was needed on the impact of the unachieved savings from 2020/21 on the budget for 2021/22 and beyond. She added that the additional information required should specifically include details on shortfalls and the plans to mitigate.

**8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

CHAIR: Councillor Ruth Gordon

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....

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**Report for:** Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

**Title:** The Size of Homes in the Housing Delivery Programme

**Lead Officer:** Anna Blandford, Head of Housing Development

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/**

**Non Key Decision:** N/A

## 1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 Council homes are now on site in more than half of Haringey's 19 wards: 358 Council homes on 14 sites across ten different wards.
- 1.2 475 homes have planning permission, and we remain on track to have 1,000 starts on site by March 2022.
- 1.3 24% of the homes with planning permission have three or more bedrooms.
- 1.4 Across the whole programme, 31% have three or more bedrooms. This is subject to change as initial designs are progressed, and we are seeking to increase the number of family sized homes wherever we can.

## 2. Recommendations

To note the report.

## 3. Background information

- 3.1 We urgently need to build more family Council homes. We are working on a programme-wide level towards dwelling mix targets for Social Rent homes as agreed by Council in February 2019:
  - 10% one-bedroom homes
  - 45% two-bedroom homes
  - 45% three-bedroom or more homes (10% being four-bed or more)
- 3.2 The new Housing Strategy, currently under preparation, will review targets in light of the newly commissioned Strategic Housing Market Assessment and other evidence such as the housing register.
- 3.3 It is important to note that there is a desperate need for Council homes of all sizes. The housing register shows that of the 581 households in the most urgent need, 364 need a one-bedroom home and 130 a two-bedroom home. Of the 11,300 households on the housing register, 73% require a one or a two-bedroom home.

- 3.4 Across the 475 Council homes that already have planning permission, including the 358 under construction, the bedroom mix is as follows:
- 163 one-bedroom homes – 34%
  - 200 two-bedroom homes – 42%
  - 102 three-bedroom homes – 22%
  - 10 four-bedroom homes – 2%
- 3.5 Eleven of these one-bedroom homes have been specified for adults leaving care, and we are working with Adult Social Care to identify clients requiring one-bedroom homes throughout the programme including for schemes that can specifically focus on meeting the borough's priority for developing supported housing.
- 3.6 At this early stage of the programme, we are not yet meeting our family housing target. This is because during the first phase of the programme, as we built up the capacity to deliver directly at scale, the proportion of Council homes delivered through acquisition will be relatively high. 69% of homes with planning permission have been acquired from developers through s106 agreements.
- 3.7 The bedroom mix in acquisitions is to a very great extent constrained by which schemes are available. 34% (112) of the 329 homes acquired have one bedroom, 45% (148) have two, 20% (56) have three and just over 1% (four) have four bedrooms. We have remodelled schemes wherever possible to maximise the number of family-sized homes; but we are constrained in this by existing planning permissions, contractual matters, and financial viability.
- 3.8 Acquisition will remain an integral part of the programme. However, as the programme goes forward, the proportion of homes delivered directly will continue to increase.
- 3.9 Building family-sized homes for social rent is financially extremely challenging in the current political environment. The more bedrooms a home has, the more expensive it is to build; and that differential is not reflected in either grant funding or rent revenue. The GLA's current programme is structured with the same grant available regardless of the size of the home being delivered.
- 3.10 For example, based on our current appraisal model, the gap in viability between a one-bed and a four-bed family home in a build programme of 12 months is striking. The revenue on a one-bedroom Council home will exceed the cost of interest in year one, and it takes 20 years to pay off the loan required to build it. Rental revenue for a four-bedroom home in the same scheme does not exceed interest until year 30, and it takes 80 years to pay off its loan.
- 3.11 This is reflected starkly in the key metric of Net Present Value (NPV), the value of each home to the landlord calculated in terms of rental income less costs.

One-bedroom homes on this example scheme would have a positive NPV of £116,000; four-bedroom homes would have a negative NPV of minus £71,387.

- 3.12 This is why Housing Associations do not now build family-sized homes for social rent. the last time any four bed homes for social rent were constructed in Haringey was in 2009 when L&Q Housing Association built two properties at Dickenson Road.
- 3.13 It is also the reason it is so crucial for the Council to find ways to deliver a viable programme that includes the family-sized homes we need.
- 3.14 We are taking a range of steps to maximise the numbers of family sized homes. Ashley Road, our largest direct-delivery site so far, will deliver around 150 Council homes - 65% of which will have three or four bedrooms. On this site we are also seeking to provide one-bedroom homes for adults with learning difficulties and two- and three-bedroom homes for formerly homeless families. Work on the new HRA Business Plan has focused on increasing the number of family homes. We are working with the GLA to make the case for an increased grant for family-sized homes in their next funding programme. We have also developed a Neighbourhood Moves Scheme that will prioritise smaller homes for local people in underoccupied homes, thereby releasing family-sized homes for those that need them.
- 3.15 Across our current programme, 31.3% of the homes have three or more bedrooms. This is an indicative projection: many schemes are at an early stage, and as they progress through an iterative design process, with consultation and engagement at its heart, the size and configuration of schemes will inevitably change. We will continue to take active steps to maximise the number of family homes on each scheme and across the programme as a whole.

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Report for: **Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel**

Title: **Woodside Avenue and the Cranwood Housing Development Site**

Report  
Authorised by: **David Joyce, Director of Housing, Regeneration and Planning**

Lead Officer: **Robbie Erbmann, Assistant Director Housing**

Ward(s) affected: **Muswell Hill**

Report for Key/ Non Key Decision: No

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

1.1. This report summarises the process through which the Council sought to include Woodside Avenue in the Cranwood development site before accepting that the site would not include that land.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1. Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel is recommended to note this report.

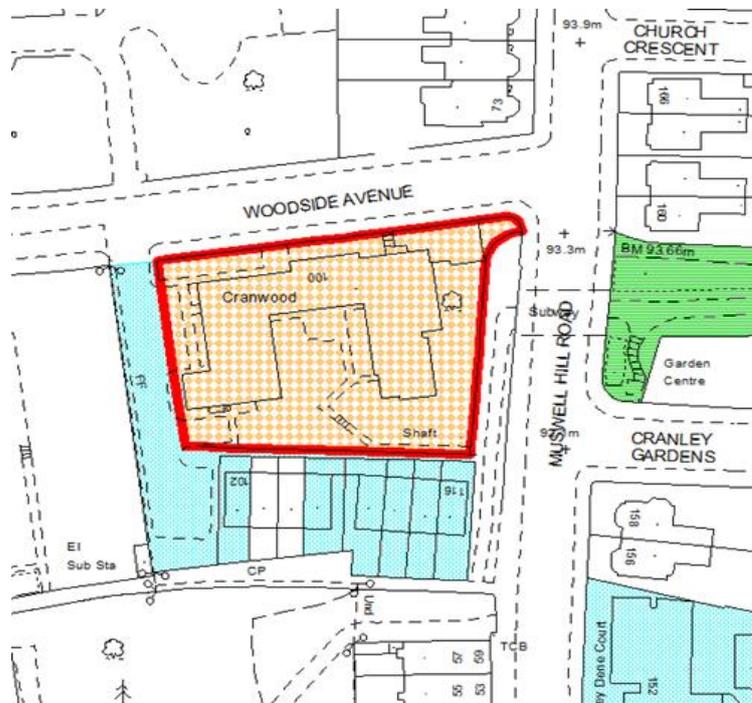
**3. Background information**

3.1. In 2014, the site of the former Cranwood Care Home site was included as part of the portfolio of sites for development under the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV). Capacity studies indicated that a development of between 62 and 98 new homes could be achieved on the site.

3.2. These proposals and the subsequent HDV designs for a scheme of 62 homes presupposed the demolition of the adjoining terrace of eight three-bedroom houses at 102 to 116 Woodside Avenue. The Council was the landlord of six of the homes; the freeholds of 104 and 106 Woodside Avenue had been sold under the Right to Buy. The demolition of these houses was based on two key factors:

3.1.1 Demolition would increase the footprint of the site by around 50% (from its red line on the plan below to include the areas marked in blue) and because of significant constraints within the smaller site increase its capacity by up to 100%.

3.1.2 Haringey's Local Plan Site Allocations DPD includes within its boundary both the former care home and 102 to 116 Woodside Avenue, establishing a preference for the whole site to come forward together for new residential development.



- 3.3. In July 2018, the Council decided to end the HDV and instead begin a programme of direct Council housing delivery. Officers resumed negotiations to acquire 104 and 106 Woodside Avenue.
- 3.4. At the same time, a private developer was negotiating with the owners of both properties in an attempt to acquire both and create a ransom strip along the Cranwood site. The Council's offer to purchase the Properties needed to be attractive enough to incentivise the freeholders to sell to the Council rather than to the developer.
- 3.5. In September 2018, Cabinet agreed to acquire 106 Woodside Avenue for £2.15 million and 104 Woodside Avenue on terms delegated to the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Planning and the Director of Finance. It was anticipated that the terms for 104 would be similar to those for 106.
- 3.6. In spite of exceeding its basic market value, the sum of £2.15m was felt to represent value for money for three reasons:
- 3.6.1 The acquisition of 104 and 106 would unlock the whole site and enable the delivery of up to 98 new homes instead of around 40. Most of the additional homes would have been desperately-needed Council homes.
- 3.6.2 Up to 20 of the new homes would have been for market sale – and these would have ensured that the Council not only recovered the money spent to acquire 104 and 106 Woodside Avenue, but also brought substantial additional funds into the HRA to support the delivery of even more Council homes.
- 3.7. Subsequent negotiations to purchase 104 Woodside Avenue stalled because the owner sold an option on the property to the private developer. Negotiations resumed, and by May a potential deal was reached for acquiring 104 Woodside Avenue.

- 3.8. In April 2020, Quality Review Panel recommended that the Council's designs for the site should be revised down to 62 homes.
- 3.9. Throughout this period, the Council was in discussion with the four secure tenants at Woodside Avenue to explore options for rehousing them either in new homes on the existing site or elsewhere in the borough. The tenants remained adamant throughout the process that they wanted to remain in their existing homes.
- 3.10. In June 2019, the Council decided to respect the wishes of the secure tenants to remain in their existing homes and therefore to terminate negotiations towards the acquisition of 104 Woodside Avenue.
- 3.11. The Council are now progressing a smaller scheme of 42 homes on the site of the former care home: 32 for social rent and ten for market sale. In the new proposals, the eight existing homes at Woodside Avenue will be retained – four occupied by secure Council tenants, three used by the Council to provide homes for homeless families, and one occupied by the remaining freeholder.
- 3.12. Statutory 105 consultation with residents at Woodside Avenue is not necessary for the new scheme because of the exclusion of their homes from the development site. Nevertheless we will of course take a thorough approach to engagement. We are engaging with members around the new proposals before engaging residents and community stakeholders – including the residents of Woodside Avenue - in November. After concluding the engagement process, we will consider all submissions carefully, adapting our proposals where necessary. The planning process, of course, is another opportunity for community and political oversight; and, once planning permission has been achieved, the development proposals will be taken to Cabinet for approval. We are aiming for a start on site by November 2021.

## **4. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

- 4.1. This report aims to provide information so that the Scrutiny Committee can hold the Council accountable for the steps taken in relation to Cranwood and Woodside Avenue, and support the Borough Plan's commitment that Haringey will be a council that uses its resources in a sustainable way to prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable residents
- 4.2. This report sets out the steps the Council has taken to maximise housing delivery at the Cranwood site in order to support the Borough plan's Housing Priority: "We will work together to deliver the new homes Haringey needs, especially new affordable homes". In particular, the steps described in this report were taken to support the Council's commitment "to deliver 1,000 new council homes at council rents by 2022".

## **5. Statutory Comments**

- 5.1. The assistant Director for Corporate Governance has been consulted on the content of this report. Any comments have been incorporated into the report. Comments from Finance and Strategic Property have also been incorporated into this report

6. **Use of appendices**

6.1. None

7. **Local Government (Access To Information) Act 1985**

Not applicable

<b>Report for:</b>	Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel, 2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Accommodation Strategy Update
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Charles Adje, Cabinet Member for Finance & Strategic Regeneration
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All
<b>Report for Key/ Non Key Decision:</b>	N/A

## 1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1 An update about the Accommodation Strategy has been requested for Scrutiny Panel in March 2021. This report summarises information available in the most recent reports agreed by Cabinet which provide the latest position on the accommodation strategy:

- Wood Green sites – September 2020
- Future Use of Civic Centre and Proposed Capital Works – December 2020
- Asset Management Plan – February 2021.

1.2 The next steps on the Civic Centre project will be reported in due course at Cabinet during 2021 and this is the next time there will be an update about the accommodation strategy.

## 2. Recommendations

To note the report.

## 3. Background information

3.1 Cabinet considered a report in September 2020 about its corporate buildings in Wood Green. The report outlined the need to reassess the business case for new accommodation and set out a timetable for decisions about this – with a report due to Cabinet in December 2020 about the Civic Centre and further reports in Summer 2021 about other Wood Green accommodation sites.

3.2 The business case reassessment is based on two changes since the previous report on the accommodation strategy in 2019: the acquisition of Alexandra which was required to support Council accommodation changes over the medium term; and the Covid-19 pandemic which has required a period of reflection to consider the longer term implications for office accommodation, new ways of working, and the use and style of future customer services including sports facilities. The September report referenced:

- the likely need to consolidate Council accommodation to a smaller number of buildings over a 5-7 year period which would result in savings in accommodation costs in the longer run;
- the need to carry out basic repairs to Alexandra House and River Park House in as it was envisaged that these buildings would remain in use as Council accommodation for at least 5 years; and
- the need to do initial safety protection of the Civic Centre itself

3.3 The first decision in this plan was taken in December 2020 by Cabinet with approval of a proposed project to repair, restore, refurbish and extend the Civic Centre and bring the building back into use by the Council as its new Headquarters and Civic functions building. The rationale for this was set out in that report and includes:

- the estimated cost of basic repair work was c£12m and, given Council's responsibility for ensure the listed building does not deteriorate further, it was considered more cost effective and better use of the building long term to invest in a full repair and refurbishment, including extended space.
- Speed of delivery without any need for temporary moves while work is completed. The decision was not dependent on waiting to see the potential longer-term impact of Covid 19 on public service space, which has paused the completion of the accommodation strategy and specifically the project to replace the Wood Green library for now.
- The report indicated that the decision to invest in the Civic Centre does not preclude a project coming forward at a future point to improve the library and other customer services in Wood Green.
- The report highlighted that investing in the Civic Centre will also enable the Council to move more quickly to a position where it can reduce its use and costs of its existing office buildings on River Park Road over the next two to four years will contribute to financial savings that the Council will need to make over that time.

3.4 The report indicated that during 2021, as the Civic Centre project develops and more is understood about the Council's longer term accommodation requirements, it will be possible to know the extent to which the Council's HQ functions can be met in the new Civic Centre and by making better use of George Meehan House; and that it would become clearer over time what future public facilities might look like in future, including libraries and sport. The report also set out that as part of the work which is ongoing and will be reported during

2021, consideration will be given to how the car park of the Civic Centre should be developed now that the Civic Centre will become the Council's civic and office headquarters.

- 3.5 In February 2021 Cabinet approved the first annual update to the Asset Management Plan 2020 – 2025. The Asset Management Plan summarised the shifts in the accommodation strategy thinking that had been included in the September and December Cabinet reports and indicated the plan to report back to Cabinet during 2021 to firm up the extent to the Civic Centre and George Meehan House would be able to meet all of the Council's headquarter accommodation needs and the plan to consolidate the Council's accommodation buildings in Wood Green in fewer buildings over time;
- 3.6 The AMP highlighted that there would need to be a separate decision will be required about investment in the Library, and a possible sports centre, which in the report to Cabinet in July 2019 was identified as the preferred site for customer facing services in Wood Green, due to the complexity and uncertainty of this decision.

#### 4. **Next steps**

- 4.1 Work is continuing to ensure that savings from accommodation can be identified over the course of the current Medium Term Financial plan, whilst also ensuring that any site which the Council ceases to use for accommodation as part of its plans is used in ways which will support economic growth and regeneration of Wood Green as well as the underlying business case for any capital investment.
- 4.2 Priorities for the next twelve months include:
- moving forward with the Civic Centre project and deciding how and when the car park element could be developed;
  - reviewing use of George Meehan House to ensure that its use is optimised and works well with the refurbished and expanded Civic Centre spaces;
  - reviewing and outlining best steps for other Council buildings in Wood Green.

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