

# MINUTES OF MEETING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2020

## PRESENT:

**Councillors: Peray Ahmet (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Erdal Dogan, Ruth Gordon and Khaled Moyeed**

**Co-optees: Mark Chapman and Luci Davin (Parent Governor representatives), Yvonne Denny and Lourdes Keever (Church representatives)**

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

The Chair referred Members present to agenda item 1 regarding filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

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

None.

### 3. **URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

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

Councillor Ahmet declared that she was a governor at Rowland Hill Primary School. Councillor Connor declared that she was a governor at Tetherdown Primary School. Ms Keever declared that she was a governor at St Ignatius Primary School. Mr Chapman declared that he was a governor at Fortismere and Bounds Green schools and Haringey Learning Partnership. Ms Davin declared that she was a governor of Seven Sisters Primary School.

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

None.

### 6. **MINUTES**

The Committee raised the following matters from the Action Tracker:

- In respect of the development of the night times economy, they requested details of when the issue had been discussed with Wood Green ward Councillors (**Action: Clerk/Assistant Director of Regeneration and Economic Development**);
- An update was requested on the all Member briefing session on leisure and the Fusion contract that the Committee had recommended but which had been

postponed due to the lockdown (**Action: Clerk/Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Equalities and Leisure**); and

- In respect of the Citizens Panel, the Committee requested an update on progress (**Action: Head of Policy**).

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of 20 July 2020 be approved.

**7. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the following Scrutiny Panels be received and noted and any recommendations within them be approved:

- Housing and Regeneration – 16th December 2019 and 3rd. March and 14th September 2020;
- Environment and Community Safety – 17th December 2019 and 5th March and 3rd September 2020;
- Children and Young People – 19th December 2019 and 2nd March and 11th March (joint meeting with the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel) 2020; and
- Adults and Health – 6th January, 25th February and 21 September 2020.

**8. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS: DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL & CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES**

The Chair reported that, due to the change of date of the meeting, the Leader of the Council had not been able to attend. Councillor Amin, the Deputy Leader, had been asked to cover on his behalf, in her capacity as Deputy Leader. However, she was new to her role and would therefore just be covering issues relating to the Children and Families part of her portfolio. The Leader had been invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

The Deputy Leader reported as follows:

- a. It had been a turbulent time for children and young people. Headteachers and school staff had worked hard to prepare schools for their reopening. School attendance had been steady so far and in line with levels elsewhere. The attendance of more vulnerable groups was being monitored and was also steady. A small number of cases of Covid had been recorded in schools. Learning was taking place either virtually or face-to-face. Risk assessments had been undertaken and were regularly updated. The Assistant Directors for Schools and Learning and for Public Health were working with schools and had provided regular briefings;
- b. Action was being taken to ensure that more vulnerable children continued to have face-to-face contact with social care staff. New ways had also been developed of working with children so that they could continue to be supported. Staff were being supported;
- c. There was a particular challenge in ensuring that all children had access to the IT equipment that was needed for them to learn effectively at the current time and there was evidence of a “digital divide”. It was also felt that there needed to be

clear guidance on what children should be learning and the progress that they should be making, including national standards for access. The Children's Commissioner and Ofsted were currently looking at these issues.

The Committee expressed concern that, whilst it was possible to access privately run face-to-face services for children under the age of two, Children's Centres were only providing them for children who were considered vulnerable. The Cabinet Member stated that all maintained Children's Centres were open and, in particular, those with nurseries attached. It was difficult for Children's Centres though as many parents were anxious about using them at the moment. It was also challenging because of the young age of children which meant that they found it hard to understand matters such as social distancing. Eveleen Riordan, Assistant Director of Schools and Learning, stated that all Children's Centres had undertaken risk assessments. Although all maintained centres had been open, one of had needed to close due to a positive Covid-19 test. It was agreed that additional information would be provided to the Committee regarding Children's Centres, the processes that had been undertaken prior to their reopening and the services that were currently being provided. **(Action: AD for Schools and Learning).**

In answer to a question, Beverly Hendricks (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care) reported that domestic abuse remained a key priority and was a major source of referrals to Haringey Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB). At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, HSCP widened its reach to include ensuring support from the Fire Service. The Food Alliance had also been able to discreetly deliver cards with contact details for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to families where there were concerns. In particular, concierges were able to maintain a watching vigil on any families regarded as vulnerable. A Covid-19 team social care team had been established and vulnerable women who had not been in recent contact with services identified. Measures had been taken to reach out to these women so that they had points of contact. In addition, Homes for Haringey were working closely with children's social care and this included signposting any families that were new to the borough to services.

In answer to another question, Ms Hendricks stated that she felt that services worked well with families when they became aware of domestic abuse. The concern was where families were not known to social care and especially those who were new to the borough.

In answer to a question regarding co-production relating to SEN travel provision, the Cabinet Member stated that an independent report on this and other relevant issues had been published. This had been produced by Amaze, who were an organisation that had particular expertise on these issues. Consideration was being given to how the actions arising from the report could be taken forward, including co-production and how a new parent carer forum could best be set up, but this had been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. She would be able to provide an update when she next attended for Cabinet Member Questions.

The Cabinet Member reported that 200 laptops had been available by the Department for Education (DfE). In addition, the Council had made laptops available for vulnerable children. Lots of schools had also provided children with laptops and some

parents had applied to charities for them. However, the number of laptops that had been made available was not near to what was needed. Further work was being done to see how more could be obtained. Schools were also exploring means of delivering learning that did not require laptops. It was a national issue though and many authorities were facing similar challenges.

She reported that national research had shown that children had, on average, lost out on three months of learning due to the lockdown. However, the loss of learning was different for each individual child. Schools were now working very hard to ensure that children caught up and vulnerable children were not further disadvantaged. Ms Riordan reported that additional funding from the DfE to assist schools in helping children to catch up had arrived. It could only be used for tutoring though. The emotional and mental health of children and young people was particularly important at the moment and the initial emphasis within schools was to settle young people back into schooling. Progress that had been made when children were learning at home had varied greatly. Some had kept up very well whilst other children had barely accessed learning during lockdown, despite the best efforts of schools. Schools were still not operating as normal and there was considerable disruption. Haringey had collaborated in a study of the learning that had been lost. This included reference to what had been lost, what had worked well and what action needed to be taken now to enable children to catch up. The most critical fact in learning was the quality of teaching, irrespective of whether this was done on-line or face-to-face.

The Cabinet Member reported that a programme of half term activities had been put in place. In respect of travel buddies, she reported that the contract with an external organisation had been terminated during the summer. The Council was keen to retain them and action had been taken to ensure that all of them had been paid. It was nevertheless recognised that longer term arrangements needed to be made and appropriate processes followed.

Ms Riordan reported that eligibility for free school meals had been increasing. Schools had undertaken work to identify additional children who were eligible but who had not claimed. As a result of the last exercise, more than 300 children had been identified and this had also enabled schools to bring in an £280,000 this year and for the next five years through the Pupil Premium. Once the necessary data became available for this year, another check would be undertaken. There was likely to be a significant increase in eligibility due to the pandemic and lockdown. The DfE had made it clear that free school meals would not be available during the October half term. However, many schools had food or clothing banks that families could access if need be. In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member stated that schools were aware of the increased vulnerability to Covid-19 that existed amongst people from BAME communities and were providing additional support where necessary.

In response to a question, Ms Riordan stated that the different amounts that primary and secondary schools received as their budgets arose from an agreement that had been made in 1988 over class sizes for secondary schools. This has set a maximum class size of 27 and schools had received an adjustment to their budgets in response to this. Any change to this agreement was likely to be difficult. However, there was a commitment to look at the differential.

Ms Riordan reported that schools had found the need to move to on-line working challenging but some had responded well. There was a lot of learning and development work taking place with schools and this was being led by Haringey Education Partnership (HEP). Examples of good practice from schools was being shared widely.

In answer to a question regarding potential cuts to Children's Centres, the Cabinet Member stated that there was currently a £300k overspend. There had been discussions on the setting up of a review on how Children's Centres might best function and, in particular, reach a wider group of families. Ms Graham stated that services were reviewed on a regular basis as part of the budget process and there were budgetary pressures that needed to be resolved. A review would look at a range of issues, including how the cost to the authority could be reduced through actions such as maximising working with partners. Whilst suggestions were being developed, no decisions had been taken. The Committee expressed concern at the possibility of there being cuts to the Centres as this was likely to have a disproportionate effect on the most disadvantaged children in the community.

In answer to a question, Ms Riordan reported that Riverside School had been closed for a day due to a case of Covid-19 in a co-located school. Following a risk assessment, it had been re-opened. As it was a special school, the risk assessment had to be tighter than that undertaken for other schools.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Assistant Director for Schools and Learning be requested to circulate further information to the Committee regarding the processes that had been undertaken prior to the reopening of Children's Centres and the services that were currently being provided within them.

**9. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIPS**

**AGREED**

1. That the following scrutiny panels be established for 2020/21:
  - Adults and Health;
  - Children and Young People;
  - Environment and Community Safety; and
  - Housing and Regeneration
2. That the terms of reference, policy areas and membership for each scrutiny panel be approved.
3. That the appointments of the Council's representatives to the North Central London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and of an additional member to the Adults and Health Panel be deferred until the next meeting.

**10. REVISION OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY 2021-2026**

Dalaih Barrett, Licensing Team Leader, reported on the review of the Council's Licensing Policy. All licensing authorities were required to do this every five years. The policy covered the licensing of alcohol, regulated entertainment and late night refreshments. Legislative changes had been incorporated. In respect of the response to Covid, businesses were now able to fast track applications for placing tables and chairs outside premises for one year at a reduced cost as part of the Business and Planning Act. However, take up had been slow so far. Lessons learnt had been incorporated within the new policy and, in particular, the review by the Friends of Finsbury Park on events held there. The Council's Public Health service had been wanting to establish a Community Impact Zone in an area within the borough in response to the harm arising from alcohol, including crime and anti-social behaviour. This enabled authorities to specify that an area had reached saturation point for licensed premises and made it more difficult for premises to obtain or extend licenses. However, clear evidence needed to be produced that alcohol was the main driver.

The Committee expressed disappointment that a Community Impact Zone had not yet been set up in the borough as the adverse impact of alcohol on locations within the borough could be clearly seen. It was felt that learning could be obtained from other authorities that had implemented such schemes. It was agreed that the Committee would recommend that a report come to a future meeting of the Committee on the setting up of a zone within Haringey (**Action: Licensing Team Leader**).

In answer to a question, Ms Barrett stated the Council followed all relevant legislation regarding consultation. All licensed premises and the public had invited to respond to the consultation on the new policy. 8 weeks had been allowed for responses. 4 questions had been included plus the opportunity to input free text. In respect of School Zones, Public Health could make representations regarding licensing applications in such areas. However, the legislation required that evidence was based on clear evidence and not just anecdotal.

In answer to another question, she stated that there was a section on the process for reviewing licenses. Clear evidence needed to be provided by those objecting that premises were not complying with their responsibilities. Applications were shared with responsible authorities who were given 28 days to respond. Her service was not able to solicit responses but met regularly with authorities and could provide guidance. She stated that residents should bring any incidents to the attention of the local Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Licensing Team Leader be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on the potential development of a Community Impact Zone within an area of Haringey.

## **11. BREXIT - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BOROUGH**

Jean Taylor, the Head of Policy, reported on the work that was taking place in response to the UK leaving the European Union (EU) and, in particular, the leaving of the Single Market and the Customs Union in December. The details of any deal were still not known and the current Covid-19 pandemic had created additional uncertainty.

Particular efforts were being made to ensure that EU residents obtained settled status. There were specific risks arising from a loss of income due to economic downturn and the impact on the workforce if significant numbers of staff did not obtain settled status before the June deadline. Brexit could also disrupt the Council's supply chain and exacerbate skills shortages. The economic impact could also have a negative impact on residents. The risk register was a dynamic document and would be further developed in due course.

In answer to a question regarding a possible upsurge in hate crime, Ms Taylor stated local lockdowns elsewhere had created tensions in the community. In addition, any protests against Brexit could increase virus transmission.

Concern was expressed by the Committee regarding the impact on recruitment and retention of Council staff, especially those in areas where there were skills shortages, and those who worked for Council contractors. Ms Taylor reported that work was taking place to determine the number of Council staff affected so that action could be taken to ensure that they all acquired settled status. This would include an internal communications campaign. There was an awareness amongst officers of the areas where there were skills shortages. Discussions had taken place with contractors and reassurance provided regarding the impact upon them. She reported that there were currently ten offices from across the Council who were working on this matter.

**RESOLVED:**

That a further report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee and that this includes additional detail on the financial risk to the Council (**Action: Head of Policy**).

**12. FIRE SAFETY - UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Robbie Erbmman, Assistant Director for Housing, reported on progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the scrutiny review on Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks as follows:

- a. The Building Safety Bill would provide the framework for the implementation of the recommendations of the Hackitt Review and was likely to result in sweeping changes when passed. Although a further report on the legislative changes was due to come to the Committee on 12 January, he felt that it might be better to wait for this until such time as the bill had progressed further through parliament;
- b. The practical application of the new legislation was currently being worked through, including the requirements for an Accountable Officer and Building Safety Manager as well as the need for building fire safety cases for high rise blocks;
- c. Building Control officers had been upskilled and now all had the highest competencies for fire safety. Homes for Haringey were currently also recruiting for their building safety management team. It had been planned to recruit a single person to undertake the roles required but these had now been spread across the team due to the very limited number of individuals there were who possessed all the required skills; and
- d. Intrusive fire risk assessments were being undertaken on all high rise blocks on Broadwater Farm and other blocks and would be completed within 9 to 12 months.

Bob McIver, the Head of Building Control, reported that although efforts that had been made to recruit additional Building Control officers, these had not been very successful so action had instead been taken to upskill current staff. Consideration was being given to recruiting apprentices but it was not easy to deliver training at the moment though, due to the team not currently being in the office due to the pandemic. In addition, funding was a big issue.

In answer to a question, it was noted that the communication strategy regarding engagement with residents on fire safety was currently being updated and that it could be shared with the Committee when completed (**Action: AD for Housing**). Signage was also now being provided in a range of community languages.

The Committee requested that information on Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) of blocks be shared with local ward Councillors. In response to a question, Farzad Fazilat, Head of Brokerage, reported that two engagement events had been held with care and nursing homes on fire safety and these had also included the Fire Service. Care homes and nursing homes were required to display FRAs on their premises but not obliged to put them on their websites. They were nevertheless encouraged to do so and he agreed to request that they do so again (**Action: Head of Brokerage**).

Councillor Gordon stated that there were a number of individual issues relating to fire safety that she would like to consider in greater detail at the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel. In particular, there was a lack of information regarding FRAs on buildings where fire risk had been assessed as substantial. It was also unclear whether there were FRAs for sheltered housing developments. In addition, there were a number of buildings that either had timber frames or some sort of cladding. There were also issues arising from the fire that had taken place at Firs House that needed to be addressed. In respect of Building Control, concern was expressed that little progress had been achieved in recruiting additional officers. If additional officers were recruited, they could potentially generate income for the Council. It was agreed to recommend that at least two apprentice Building Control Officers be recruited (**Action: Dir, Housing, Regeneration and Planning**).

Mr Erbmann stated that further work could be undertaken to increase the transparency of FRAs. There were still a number of intrusive FRAs that needed to be completed. Once this process was finished, there would be more clarity on the level of risk. Work relating to timber framed buildings had been brought forward and would be starting soon. There were no buildings in the borough with cladding that were classified as high risk. Investigations on the fire at Firs House were continuing. However, indications were that compartmentation in the original structure had been effective and that the problems had arisen from the new roof. It was important that fire safety was considered fully where changes were made to buildings.

Mr McIver reported that a review had been undertaken of all buildings within the borough that were over 18 metres tall, with details passed onto the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). There were approximately 130 of these. A number of buildings with cladding were now having works. It was noted that Homes had 54 high rise blocks within the borough. None of these had cladding that was considered to be high risk. It was agreed that further information would be shared with the Committee on lower rise buildings that had cladding.



Ms Denny stated that there had been some delays in remedial work being undertaken in some blocks, including fitting of new fire doors. This was despite leaseholders already having paid for the necessary works. Mr Erbmann reported that there had not been complete confidence that the original fire doors selected to be fitted would meet the necessary safety standards so new ones were now being selected. He agreed to write to Ms Denny to provide further information.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That communication strategy regarding engagement with residents on fire safety be shared with Committee Members when completed;
2. That information on Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) undertaken on housing blocks be shared with local ward Councillors;
3. To recommend to Cabinet that at least two apprentice Building Control Officers be recruited to the Council's Building Control team; and
4. That further information be shared with the Committee on lower rise Homes for Haringey blocks that have cladding.

**13. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

It was noted that there was some space for adding additional items to the work plan for the remaining scheduled meetings for the year, although this was likely to be limited in the January meetings due to budget scrutiny. The review on Business Support (Procurement and the Local Supply Chain) still needed to be finalised. All the evidence received so far had now been collated and consideration now needed to be given to how the review could be brought to a conclusion. Proposals for a virtual consultative event were currently being developed the purpose of this would be to consult further with the community on future items for the workplan. It was agreed that individual issues of concern arising from the Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks review would be taken up by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel whilst the Committee would maintain an overview of the implementation of the recommendations of the review.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the current work programmes for the main Committee and Scrutiny Panels be noted; and
2. That individual issues of concern arising from the Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks review be taken up by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel whilst the Committee maintain an overview of the implementation of the recommendations.

CHAIR: Councillor Peray Ahmet

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....