

MINUTES OF MEETING Overview and Scrutiny Committee HELD ON Monday, 15th March, 2021, 7.00 - 10.15 pm

PRESENT:

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

Also Present: Yvonne Denny, Lourdes Keever and Cllr Zena Brabazon

30. FILMING AT MEETINGS

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

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Kanupriya Jhunjunwala.

32. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Item 11, Lourdes declared that her son and his partner were leaseholders in Noel Park.

The Chair advised that she was a ward Councillor in Noel Park.

Cllr Moyeed declared that he was also a ward Councillor in Noel Park.

34. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings on 12th January 2021 and 18th January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

36. FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH RISE BLOCKS - UPDATE

Clerk's note – Cllr Blake was running late, so the Chair agreed to alter the order of the agenda. The minutes reflect the order in which items were discussed during the meeting, rather than the order of items on the published agenda.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee previously approved recommendations on Fire Safety in High Rise blocks at its meeting on 25 March 2019. Cabinet provided a response to those recommendations at its meeting on 9 July 2019. The Committee considered a further update on Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks at this meeting. The covering report and presentation were introduced by Bob Mclver, Head of Building Control as set out in the agenda pack at pages 27 – 46. The following arose from the discussion of this item:

- a. In response to a question about the Council's interactions with housing associations around fire safety, officers advised that associations were required to report direct to MCHLG on their own terms rather than via the Council. It was noted that there was significant funding available from the government for the removal of ACM cladding and that housing associations were liaising with the government as a result. However, officers advised that to date the MHCLG were not allowing the Council to see the data in relation to housing association properties. The Head of Building Control was continuing to push back on this in order to have a complete picture of all buildings in the borough.
- b. Officers were asked to comment on the level of influence that the Council had with private buildings and housing associations to access fire safety reports. In response, officers advised that the information pertaining to private buildings was captured as part of the data capture exercise but housing association returns were provided to the MHCLG directly. Bob Mclver agreed to speak to the AD Housing and ask him to include this on the agenda for the next meeting between housing officers and social housing providers. **(Action: Bob Mclver)**.
- c. The Committee requested that it receive further information in relation to the Homes for Haringey (HfH) pilot that was being set up and due to report back in 3-6 months. Officers agreed to request that a report come back to either the Committee or the Housing Panel on the outcome of the pilot scheme. **(Action: Bob Mclver)**.
- d. The Committee reiterated a request that had been made previously around Councillors receiving detailed fire safety risk assessments on HfH estates. Officers agreed to feed this back to HfH for a comment and it was also suggested that this could be picked up at a future meeting of the building safety group. **(Action: Bob Mclver)**.
- e. In relation to a question about existing buildings in Tottenham Hale with cladding, officers advised that they had received all of the returns around this as well as other issues and the cladding in question was not ACM cladding, so not the same material as at Grenfell. As far as officers were aware, an application from the freeholders for funding to change the cladding had been made to the government.
- f. In relation to new build properties, it was noted that Haringey Building Control were inspecting a number of these and it was confirmed that this wasn't a paper exercise and that a proper inspection process was carried out.
- g. In relation to concerns about staffing pressures given the increased number of inspections required, officers confirmed that this was a concern and the Head of Building Control was preparing a report for his Assistant Director around altering the staffing structure to address additional demand from emerging new

- legislation. All of the building surveyors in Building Control were qualified to carry out the high risk work. However additional resources to carry out the high risk work would be required along with taking on board a number of apprenticeships who would be involved in low risk inspections (rather than high rise blocks).
- h. The Committee agreed to put forward an urgent recommendation to Cabinet about the need for additional staffing resources within Building Control and that this should be part of a wider discussion about the resources required within that team. **(Action: Committee Members/Clerk).**
 - i. The Committee welcomed proposals to recruit more apprentices in Building Control.
 - j. The Committee sought assurances around the role of residents panels and who would sit on these. In response, officers advised that the panels emerged in response to residents at Grenfell saying that nobody listened to their concerns. However, the exact details of how these would be made up and their powers would be developed further as part of the secondary legislation emerging from the Building Safety Bill and would be a matter for HfH.
 - k. The Committee also sought assurances around what was being done for residents with disabilities to ensure that plans were in place to help them leave buildings in an emergency. In response, officers advised that Building Control did not have any control over where accessible units were located within a block. In many instances disabled residents would be located on lower floors, or higher levels would contain evacuation refuges which would include a communications system with the concierge, for example.
 - l. In response to concerns raised about the timescales of it taking 4 years for the legislation to be full enacted, officers assured Members that a significant amount of work was taking place in the interim and that most of the changes would be implemented before then.
 - m. Further concerns were raised about the design of buildings for disabled residents such as the use of heavy doors and the fact that lifts and internal doors were too small for wheelchair users. Further concerns were also raised about the accessibility and usability of the communications systems for some disabled residents. Officers advised that they would feed these concerns back to HfH. Officers assured the Committee that accessibility concerns were checked as part of the building control inspection process for new buildings but that HfH were responsible for existing housing stock. Part of the inspection process included minimum specifications for doors etcetera.
 - n. The Chair asked that the key points raised as part of the discussion were fed back to Cabinet and the relevant Cabinet Members for information. **(Action: Clerk).**
 - o. The Committee queried about the extent to which leaseholders had been engaged with in respect to significant increases in service charges and insurance premiums in high rise blocks due to the need to provide 24h hour fire wardens. It was questioned whether this issue had been discussed at Council meetings. Officers acknowledged the issues highlighted and the disproportionate impact on leaseholders as a result. Officers advised that there was not a great deal that the Council could do about this but advised that the government had released significant funds to assist with removal of cladding.
 - p. Cllr Brabazon commented that, in light of the information from Grenfell, the Council should be taking a leading role in working with residents and

- leaseholders about developing a participatory model of engagement, rather than waiting for the residents' panels to emerge. Officers advised that HfH were working on this and that HfH would be asked to draft an update on what was being done on this for OSC. **(Action: Bob McIver).**
- q. In response to a question around new build properties, officers confirmed that the Council was not the only body able to carry out building safety inspections and that there were also around 90+ private firms able to undertake these. Initial feedback from the Building Safety Bill was that all new buildings above 6 stories would have to go to the building safety regulator and that local authorities would be prioritised in terms of carrying out building safety inspections on these properties.
- r. In relation to stricter planning regulatory controls, officers advised that there would be a new planning requirement for a fire statement as part of the Bill, which would include information on building materials and access for the fire brigade for example. In addition, the new London Plan also contained a much greater emphasis on fire safety.
- s. The Committee agreed for a further update to come back later in the year. **(Action: Bob McIver/Clerk).**
- t. The Committee also requested that an all Member briefing should be arranged on the issue of fire safety. The Head of Building Control was asked to raise this with the relevant Cabinet Member and the relevant Director. **(Action: Bob McIver).**

RESOLVED

That the update on fire safety was noted.

37. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES

The Cabinet Member for Communities gave a short verbal update on his portfolio, which was followed by a question and answer session. The key points raised by the Cabinet Member were noted as:

- There had been four murders in the borough in 2021, which was a worrying development. Particular concerns were raised about serious youth violence and the seeming willingness of young people to carry knives. The Cabinet Member advised that he was working with officers and the Leader on how to communicate the anti-knife agenda, with a meeting arranged for 24th. The Council's Youth at Risk Strategy identified a number of high risk groups in the area, such as those excluded from mainstream education.
- The Cabinet Member advised that he was in the process of organising an all Member briefing on serious youth violence and it was anticipated that this would take place in May.
- Cllr Blake noted that he had thanked the Borough Commander for the sensitive way in which the vigils for Sarah Everard had been policed over the weekend and also expressed frustration with how the vigil was policed at Clapham.
- Progress had been made on the development of a youth centre in Wood Green, something that had been missing for at least 10 years. Officers had been asked to set up a stakeholder site visit in May. Officers were continuing to work with partners on the offer for young people and it was envisaged that the youth space would be opened before the end of the year.

- The Youth Justice service was due to undergo a thematic inspection by HMICFRS in May which would be looking at ethnic disproportionality in the youth justice system. The inspection would be carried out alongside Hackney and Lambeth.

The following arose as part the discussion on this agenda item:

- a. The Committee sought assurances around the extent to which services were being co-produced with young people and other key stakeholders. The Cabinet Member advised that there was a young person's advisory group around the Wood Green Hub and that he would feed back more details to the Committee via email. **(Action: Cllr Mark Blake)**.
- b. The Chair also highlighted a recent a discussion with young people, where some of them had expressed mistrust with the use of rangers on Wood Green High Road and that this reflected a wider mistrust of the police from some of Haringey's communities and particularly from young people. The Cabinet Member agreed that he would take this point away for further reflection and acknowledged that similar mistrust of the rangers had been raised by some homeless people.
- c. The Committee raised concerns about an emphasis on policing numbers to tackle crime and queried the extent to which the Council was looking at prevent programmes based around engagement with perpetrators. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there was some work being funded with perpetrators but that it was rather limited in its scope. The Cabinet member suggested that recent events highlighted the need for a review of how the Council promoted these programmes and provided reassurance to the public in general.
- d. The Committee queried to what extent additional resources were being looked at for schools-based interventions around violence against women and girls. In response to this, the Cabinet Member advised that he was broadly supportive of this but also highlighted the role that individual parents had to play. The Cabinet Member advised that more work could be done in this area and that he would see what came out of the process, with an update going to the Community Safety Partnership in the summer.
- e. In relation to locality based working in north Tottenham and incorporating services to support young people along with health services at the same location, the Cabinet Member advised that he hadn't had any specific discussions on this but acknowledged that this was an under-utilised resource. The Cabinet Member acknowledged concerns raised about the long-term viability of funding for Youth Service as the Council was essentially reliant on central government for funding. However, the Cabinet Member advised that the Wood Green hub would save money and bring additional resources into the borough.
- f. Officers agreed to send round some further information around work to tackle violence against women and girls. **(Action: Joe Benmore)**.
- g. The Committee noted that Haringey had been awarded £750k from MOPAC for co-production work around robberies in an area of Tottenham Hale.
- h. The Committee expressed concern about the murders that had taken place and sought assurance around what modelling had been done around further increases after lockdown had ceased. In response, the Cabinet Member cautioned that the murders were not linked but it was acknowledged that there

was a huge amount of work to do to tackle attitudes around carrying knives. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that crime levels spiked after the end of lockdown in June/July and that conversations with police were continuing. The Cabinet Member also advocated the need for ongoing interventions with those most at risk.

- i. The Committee welcomed the award of £750k from the Violence Reduction Unit and sought assurances around the late notification/engagement on the bidding process. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that Tottenham Hale was a very late allocation of funding in the process. It was noted that the Bridge Renewal Trust would play a leading role in the project and in engaging with local councillors and other stakeholders. Officers assured members that there would be significant consultation taking place with local stakeholders going forwards. In response to a question, officers advised that the funding award was based around crime figures in that particular ward (Tottenham Hale).
- j. Further concerns were noted about engagement with local ward councillors on the VRU funding. Officers acknowledged these concerns and set out that a consultative approach would be taken going forwards and that there were five different consortiums involved in managing the funds. It was reiterated that the Bridge Renewal Trust would be liaising with councillors on how this money would be spent.
- k. The Cabinet Member was asked for an update on the building works to the youth centre in Bruce Grove. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the refurbishment was happening with a number of investments made including plans for an artificial 4g football pitch. The Cabinet Member agreed to provide further information on this via email.
- l. The Cabinet Member was also asked to provide an update on the £12m capital funding allocated to alternative provision. The Cabinet Member advised that plans to move the provision to Stamford Hill Primary had not come to fruition, partially because of COVID-19. Progress was being made on returning pupils into mainstream education settings.
- m. Cllr Brabazon emphasised the importance of a public health approach to violence prevention and the successful work that had taken place in other areas around adopting an epidemiological approach and the importance of starting with early years provision. The Cabinet Member advised that the Council was working very closely with the Mayor's office and the Violence Reduction Unit on this. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the point about early years and set out that all Member briefing on serious youth violence which would provide an opportunity to look at the issue in detail.

RESOLVED

Noted.

38. BREXIT - IMPLICATIONS FOR BOROUGH UPDATE

The Committee received a report for noting which provided an update on the immediate impacts of Brexit on Haringey as well as an outline for how the long-term risks and impacts of Brexit would be managed moving forward. The report was

introduced by Jean Taylor, Head of Policy as set out in the agenda pack at pages 47-52. The following arose in response to the discussion of the report:

- a. In relation to procurement implications, the Committee questioned the possible loss of checks and balances, particularly as the UK was no longer aligned OEUJ procurement regulations and whether there was still an obligation to publish with finder tendering services. The Committee also sought assurances around whether, as the Green Paper was still a long time from being published, officers were satisfied with current arrangements around checks and balances. In response, officers agreed to provide a written response to these points. **(Action: Jean Taylor).**
- b. The Committee also questioned whether, in light of market softening, the Council was purchasing properties at above market rates. It was commented that the Council could be seen as an easy way for developers to get rid of properties at the top end of market values. Officers responded that purchasing of properties was consistent with exiting strategies and assessment of need. Officers agreed to provide further information via email. **(Action: Jean Taylor).**
- c. The Committee also sought clarification as to whether there were any figures available for the number of EU citizens who had returned to their country of origin. The Committee also enquired about the number of residents who had received/applied for settled status and a comment on whether there were still problems with this process. Officers advised that there was anecdotal feedback on people returning to their country of origin, particularly in light of the economic impacts of Covid and that this applied to both those eligible for settled status as well as those who weren't. It was suggested that this trend also pre-dated the pandemic.
- d. Officers commented that there was no readily available data source that allowed the authority to get a live picture of the data. It was envisaged that the census would provide a lot of information in this regard and the Council had also amended its equalities monitoring policy to capture nationality properly for the first time.
- e. Officers also advised the Committee that securing settled status or pre-settled status was a priority for the authority and that officer resources were in place to support this. The deadline for applications was approaching in the summer and a further update could be provided on this at a future meeting.
- f. The Committee sought assurances around the impact of staffing in the care sector, which had previously been highlighted as an area of concern. In response, officers advised that the authority was monitoring the impact on the workforce and that social care workers were a particular area of concern. From the latest round of returns, officers had not been made aware of any significant impact but assured the Committee that this was an ongoing priority for monitoring.
- g. The Committee requested that a further update on Brexit be brought back to a future meeting in the early autumn and that this included an update on applications for settled status.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the update.

39. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

The Committee received a refresh to the Protocol for Overview and Scrutiny. The Committee was requested to approve the new document for recommendation to Council. The covering report and attached draft protocol were introduced by Rob Mack, Principal Scrutiny Officer as set out in the agenda pack at pages 53-66. The following arose in response to the discussion of the refreshed protocol:

- a. The Committee commented that Paragraph 6.2 should reflect that the scrutiny process should be 'led by' rather than 'coordinated by' the Chair of Budget Scrutiny. **(Action: Rob Mack).**
- b. The Committee also queried the need for greater clarity on the role of co-optees and whether the protocol should set out in more detail their role, how they are selected and in general provide greater transparency around the whole process. The Committee noted that the process for appointment of statutory co-opted Members and their role was set out in government regulations. A clearer process for the appointment non-voting co-opted Members had been drafted though and would be submitted to Council for approval alongside the Protocol. The Chair agreed to take this issue forward as part of a wider future discussion on engaging with the community and/or the Terms of Reference for OSC and its Panels. **(Action: Rob Mack).**
- c. The Committee raised concerns about the stipulation that access to information was on a need to know basis and whether this could be used to limit the capacity of scrutiny members to access relevant information. In response, the Legal Advisor to the Committee advised that this provision should be read in conjunction with what was set out in the constitution. Demonstrating a 'need to know' was a fairly well established practice and terminology. It was commented that the fact that a Chair of a particular panel was asking for the information in relation to a relevant piece of scrutiny work was more than sufficient to meet this criterion. It was noted that Section 10 of the protocol set out the legal rights that Overview and Scrutiny had to information, which were in addition to existing rights that Councillors had to access information.
- d. The Committee also raised the issue about access to more junior officers and requested that this be clarified in the protocol. In response, officers advised that this was set out in the constitution and that any change to this provision would have to be amended in the constitution through the usual process, rather than through the protocol.
- e. The Committee also requested clarification about the role of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer. In response, officers clarified that the relevant point in the protocol was around having a right to appeal a decision to that person (in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer), such as not being given access to a particular officer. The Committee was advised that the Statutory Scrutiny Officer was Richard Grice.
- f. The Chair sought assurances that Cabinet would also be engaged around the content of the protocol and asked to sign up to it. In response, officers confirmed that this would also be considered by Cabinet and that they will be asked to sign up to it as joint protocol.
- g. The Committee requested that a joint Member development event be arranged with Cabinet Members to launch the new Protocol and further develop working relationships.

RESOLVED

- I. That the draft updated Overview and Scrutiny Protocol was endorsed by the Committee and recommended to Council for final approval; and
- II. That the remits for each of the Scrutiny Panels be reviewed ahead of the 2022/23 Municipal Year.
- III. That a joint Member development event be arranged between Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet Members to launch the new Protocol and further develop working relationships.

40. SCRUTINY REVIEW - NOEL PARK

The Committee considered a Scrutiny Review carried out by the Housing and Regeneration Panel on proposed Noel Park Major Works. The report was introduced by Cllr Gordon - Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, as set out in the supplementary agenda pack at page 7. The following was raised in discussion of the report:

- a. The Committee commended the thoroughness of the report and the amount of work that had gone into it. The Committee thanked officers for their support in compiling it.
- b. The Committee raised concerns around the administration missing the 30 day deadline for the truncated process of the Section 20 notices and sought assurances around this and the potential for future legal action. In particular, it was noted that these notices would remove the rights of residents to appoint their own contractors. Cllr Gordon responded that the Panel were particularly concerned about this point and were also wary about having a truncated consultation period in the first place. It was commented that this was not how the Council should be engaging with residents. In regard to the possibility of further legal challenge, the legal advisor to the Committee suggested that he would have to come back to Committee with a comment on this as he was not involved with the issue. It was suggested that the leaseholders would have their own legal representation and it would be up to them to take any claims forward. **(Action: Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense).**
- c. The Committee also raised concerns about a general lack of consultation and engagement with leaseholders throughout the process. In response, Cllr Gordon suggested that she thought that there was a lack of engagement and was concerned that it was only in response to the campaign by leaseholders and subsequent press coverage that had jolted the administration into action and had elicited further engagement.
- d. The Committee queried the role and efficacy of the first tier tribunal for resolving disputes. Cllr Gordon commented that the first tier tribunals seemed to be quite a bureaucratic process and that in her opinion, the Council didn't need to have a third party tribunal; it just needed to listen to residents and engage properly.

Clerk's note 21:50 hrs – Under Committee Standing Order 63, the Committee agreed to suspend Committee Standing Order 18, thereby extending the meeting past the 22:00 cut-off point.

- e. The Committee raised concerns about the high cost of the estimates for leaseholders and suggested that the reason for this was because repairs had been left for long and the decision to do the work had been delayed by different administrations. It was commented that it seemed fundamentally unfair to charge the leaseholders so much for a problem that was not of their making. It was commented that the Housing Panel should continue to pursue this point.
- f. The Committee also noted concerns with delays in responding to questions and FOI request from leaseholders throughout this process. In response, Cllr Gordon advised that the panel also shared these concerns and advised that it was the role of scrutiny to provide a constructive challenge to the administration and to raise concerns when things went wrong.
- g. The Chair also commented that the leaseholders had made it very clear that they did not want to delay the pod replacements for the tenants but the cost implications for leaseholders were potentially ruinous.

RESOLVED

That the Committee approved the report and its recommendations and approved its submission to Cabinet for response.

41. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee requested that further updates be brought back to the Committee in due course on both fire safety and Brexit. **(Rob Mack)**.

RESOLVED

- I. That the work programmes that the main Committee and Scrutiny Panels have followed in 2020/21 were noted along with any outstanding items.
- II. That process for developing the work plan for 2021/22 was approved; and
- III. That responsibility for the final approval of the Committee's response consultation by Whittington Health on changes to its estates and services in Haringey was delegated to the to the Head of Legal and Governance in consultation with the Chair.

42. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

43. FUTURE MEETINGS

This was the last meeting of the 2020-21 municipal year.

CHAIR: Councillor Peray Ahmet

Signed by Chair

Date