# MINUTES OF MEETING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 6TH JULY 2021

## Councillors: Khaled Moyeed (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Dana Carlin, Makbule Gunes and Matt White

## Co-opted Members: Yvonne Denny and Lourdes Keever (Church representative) and KanuPriya Jhunjhunwala (Parent Governor representative)

### 57. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to item one on the agenda in respect of filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

### 58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Ms Jakhu.

### 59. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

### 60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of item 9 (Statement of Gambling Policy), Councillor declared that he had previously been briefed on this issue whilst as the appropriate Cabinet Member but had not taken any decisions relating to it.

### 61. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

The Committee received a deputation in respect of the Council's draft Gambling Policy. The deputation stated that 20% of shop premises in Tottenham were now being used for gambling purposes. This was bad for the area and they felt that it would not be tolerated in other areas of the borough. There had previously been successful campaigns in some areas of the borough to stop betting shops but residents were not always aware of proposed new establishments.

Gambling could cause harm to people in the community and, in some cases, could lead to debt and destitution. Gambling had a particularly negative impact on young people and some premises were offering free refreshments to entice them in. Poorer communities were often targeted by operators as these were likely to provide the greatest profits. They were disappointed that a new establishment had been allowed to open in Tottenham recently, despite opposition from local people.

In answer to a question regarding how they wished the Council to respond further, the deputation stated that there had been no consultation with the local community regarding the proposed opening of new gambling premises in Tottenham and no

consideration over whether it was wanted locally. They felt that there was a need for the Council to be more ambitious in its approach. In addition, they felt that more genuine consultation was required with residents.

Committee Members stated that although gambling could be a blight on local communities, the Council had very limited powers to prevent establishments from opening. It was not possible for the Council to just say that it did not want them. Current legislation stated that there was an "aim to permit" and the Council and other local authorities had asked the government to remove this.

The deputation responded that they were aware that local authorities had limited powers. They already felt that they knew what the outcome of consultation on the issue would be and there was little chance of the Council stopping establishments from opening by using the law as it currently stood. They felt that the Council could nevertheless make local people more aware when proposals were made to open establishments as well as what they could do if they objected to them.

Committee Members stated that they shared the concerns of the deputation regarding the proliferation of gambling establishments and, in particular, the disproportionate number of these that there were in the more deprived parts of the borough. Men from some Black and Minority Ethnic communities were also disproportionately affected by gambling.

Councillor Ruth Gordon, the Cabinet Member for House Building, Place-Making and Development, reported that ward Councillors had objected robustly to a recent proposal to open a gambling establishment in Tottenham and the application had been turned down initially. However, the application had been agreed when re-submitted by the applicant despite there being a number of objections. Unlike the first time, the Police had not objected to the re-submitted application. In addition, the application had not been noticed as much when re-submitted.
It was noted that the application was submitted during the lockdown period. The government had made no changes to the Licensing laws in response to lockdown and Councils had still been required to process applications received during this time. There was a prescribed process under the Gambling Act that dealt with the application procedure and this had been followed by the Council. It had also gone beyond statutory requirements by sending information on the application to residents referred to it by ward Councillors. The original application for the premises was for 24 hours. When opening hours were reduced for the re-submitted application, the Police no longer objected.

The Chair reported that the Council had asked for the "aim to permit" provision to be abolished in response to consultation on the Gambling Act Review. In addition, they had also stated that local authorities should have the power to say when the number of gambling premises had reached saturation point and that local residents should be able to influence decisions. He felt that a campaign was required to bring about the necessary legislative changes and that this should involve local Members of Parliament.

Councillor Noah Tucker stated that he felt that there ought to be clarity that the Council did not support the proliferation of gambling establishments and the harm they caused to the community. Councillor Ibrahim felt that the Council should look at what more it

could do to address the issue. One of the biggest problem areas was Green Lanes, which had the largest concentration of gambling establishments in western Europe. It was clear that gambling could lead to harm, including domestic violence and homelessness. Operators knew the demographics of areas and targeted those where they felt they might be most successful. She felt that the Council should campaign strongly for changes to relevant legislation.

## 62. STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

Daliah Barrett, Licensing Team Leader, introduced a report on the Council's draft Statement of Gambling Policy. Local authorities were required to review this every three years. The draft was currently being consulted upon by the Council and the Committee were invited to submit any comments that they may have. The consultation would on 6 September and the final policy would be approved by Cabinet in November.

Gambling was legal but had the potential to cause a range of harm and there was also a disproportionate impact on some communities. The Gambling Commission had acknowledged the harm gambling caused and was undertaking some work to address it. Research was taking place and it was being looked at as a public health issue. The Council's draft statement focused on how the Council carried out its regulation of gambling. Key licensing objectives were preventing crime and disorder, ensuring that gambling was fair and open and protecting children and vulnerable people.

The current legislation was permissive and designed to provide "light touch" regulation. The draft statement was based on legislation and guidance from the Gambling Commission. There were currently no casinos in Haringey. There had been some clustering of betting shops and this had been driven by the prevalence of fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs). However, stakes had been reduced to £2 from April 2019 and this had led to clustering no longer being profitable for operators. Whilst this had led to a reduction in the number of betting shops, some had been re-purposed as adult gaming centres. The Local Area Profile acted as a guide for operators to use when preparing risk assessments. There were default conditions for adult gaming centres and these included 24 hour opening but the Local Area Profile had been used to bring about reduced hours for them within the borough.

The Council had responded to the recent call for evidence as part of the review of the Gambling Act. It had asked that the community impact could be taken into account when determining applications, that the "needs test" be restored and that the "aim to permit" provision in current legislation be removed. The outcome of the review would not be known for another year. The review had been geared towards looking at emerging issues though, such as the growth of on-line gambling.

The consultation on the Council's draft statement was underway and details had been shared with a wide range of stakeholders including Councillors, operators, neighbouring boroughs and the Citizen's Panel. It was an open and public consultation and residents were encouraged to respond. However, the legislation forbade local authorities from just responding that there were too many gambling establishments in their area or putting forward moral considerations. There was an argument for a bespoke piece of research being undertaken on the harm caused by gambling. There was currently a lack of local data and research findings could be used to provide additional detail within

the Local Area Profile. In answer to a question, she stated that there was a requirement within the Gambling Act to consult on the draft statement. The views of residents were very welcome as part of the consultation but it was not possible for the Council to just state that there too many premises.
Committee Members felt that the consultation document needed to be made more accessible so that residents were better able to respond. It was also felt that reference also needed to be made to support available to those harmed by gambling. It was also felt that consideration could be given to proactively contacting residents regarding upcoming applications. Ms Barrett responded that the Council could be vulnerable to legal challenge if there was an onus on it informing the local community of applications. The Committee noted that the two high streets with the highest number of gambling establishments were Tottenham, which had 12, and Wood Green, which had 9. The total number within the borough had reduced slightly from 64 to 58.

In answer to a question regarding whether it was possible for the Council to be explicit in its opposition to gambling, Ms Barrett stated that there was a need to be careful. The Council could not be seen to be negative about an activity that was legal. Licensing officers and the Licensing Committee had to remain neutral and balanced. The best course of action was likely to be for the Council to continue to lobby central government.

The Committee commented that seemed to be little purpose to the consultation on the policy as it was not possible to include the issue of greatest concern – the proliferation of gambling establishments – in the response due to the current legislation. The most fruitful way forward was likely to be building a campaign to persuade the government to change licensing legislation and involving local MPs in this. In addition, residents could be kept informed of any upcoming applications.

Councillor Tucker commented that although the policy following a prescribed format, the foreword came from the Council. He was the view that this should be reconsidered and rewritten in a way that was less supportive of the gambling industry.

The Committee noted that there were limited funds within the budget for Overview and Scrutiny to cover the cost of support for individual scrutiny projects. In addition, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny were currently working on a project with the Gambling Commission on the harm caused by gambling to raise awareness and increase the involvement of elected Members in addressing it. It was also noted that there was a responsibility on the gambling industry to contribute to support for problem gamblers. However, such individuals were required to self-declare. Ms Barrett stated that she was happy to assist any Members of the Committee who wished to bring the consultation to the attention of schools or other organisations. The Council was required to put the full statement on its website as part of the consultation. However, there was also a survey that people could respond to as well. She agreed to circulate a link to the consultation to all Members of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Committee's response to the consultation on the Statement of Gambling Policy be as follows:
   (a). That the foreword to be re-written to be less supportive of gambling; and

(b). That a greater effort be made to alert residents of forthcoming planning and licensing applications for gambling establishments.

2. That a piece of research be commissioned by the Council on the local impact of gambling establishments on the community and, in particular, any harm caused by them.

## 63. MINUTES

In respect of (n). in item 50 (Cabinet Member Questions - the Leader of the Council), the Committee requested an update on concerns regarding trees being cut down and feedback from residents about lack of communication or consultation when this happened.

**RESOLVED:**

That subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting of 8 June be approved.

## 64. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS

**RESOLVED**

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

- Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel – 11th March 2021
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel – 8th March 2021
- Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel – 4th March 2021
- Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel – 2nd March 2021

## 65. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSE BUILDING, PLACE MAKING AND DEVELOPMENT

Cllr Ruth Gordon, the Cabinet Member for House Building, Place Making and Development, gave the Committee an update on key developments from within the areas of her portfolio that came within the terms of reference of the Committee:

- She reported that Covid government grants amounting to just under £92 million had been distributed by the Council to businesses in the borough. Home based businesses had not initially been entitled but this had now been rectified and, in addition, they would now be able to claim an allowance of £312 for property costs once the scheme reopened for applications;
- There had been a recent flood in Wood Green High Road that had caused damage to a number of businesses. Assistance had been provided for those affected by it; and
- A Good Economy Recovery Plan (GERP) had been launched by the Council last year in response to Covid pandemic and was intended to provide a road map for recovery for the local economy. It was informed by analysis of how the borough had been affected. 22,000 residents were employed within the borough and the pandemic had had a huge impact on them. The plans covered a range of issues including provision of outdoor seating and reduction of crime.

The business sector in the borough was dominated by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and the plans reflected this. Further consideration was now being given to the overall strategy. In particular, what had worked well and what had not been successful were being considered.

In answer to a question, she reported that the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel on 8 July would include discussion of plans for Wards Corner, Broadwater Farm and High Road West and relevant officers would be there to assist in answering questions. In respect of Wards Corner, a viability report by the developer had stated that the proposed development was no longer economically viable. As was the normal practice in such situations, the Council had commissioned its own independent assessment, which had now been completed. Discussions were taking place with traders on the future of the site. It was agreed that the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Economic Development would provide a written answer to a question from Councillor White regarding the progress with the implementation of the Fairness Commission recommendation on the incentivisation of payment of the London Living Wage.

In answer to a question regarding place making, she stated that regeneration could be perceived as a "top down" process. Place making focussed more on building communities and developing a sense of belonging. The intention was to develop genuine engagement with residents and ensure that their views were listened to ahead of plans being developed. She reported that the Council's role in respect of Covid grants was to passport them to local businesses. They had been lobbied by some groups who had been excluded, such as home based businesses, and had responded to their concerns where able to.

In answer to a question about preserving green space, she stated that there was a balance to be struck. There were 10,000 people on the Council's housing waiting list as well as 3,000 people in temporary accommodation. Where the Council was building new homes on land that it owned, there was a greater opportunity to influence development. There was a need for discussion with local people regarding the competing demands on land. In answer to another question regarding networks of town centre managers, she stated that these had been developed as well as peer support for businesses. In respect of the £720k entrepreneurship and business support grant, she did not have a breakdown of its use but officers would be able to provide this. It was noted that apprenticeships came within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Corporate Services.

Committee Members commented that there was a need for high speed broadband to be accessible across the borough. In addition, there was also a need to have a vision for how the borough might look like in the future.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member stated that she did not have the dates for when the independent viability study on the Wards Corner development was commissioned and received but would share them with the Committee following the meeting. In respect of a grant given by the Bridge Renewal Trust to assist with the development on the site, she stated that her understanding was that it was not required to be returned if the development did not go ahead but would establish whether this was the case and share this with the Committee. The viability study undertaken by the developer had stated that the scheme was no longer viable and the Council's

independent report had concurred with this. The future use of the site would be discussed with traders in order to establish their wishes before determining the way forward. In addition, engagement would take place with ward Councillors and the wider community. In respect of the purchase of homes by the Council from developers, she stated that her preference was for the Council to build its own homes on its own land and to its own specifications. However, she was happy to look at purchasing affordable homes from developers if it made financial sense. Each proposal would be considered on its own merits.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Economic Development be requested to provided written responses on the following:
   (a) Progress with the implementation of the Fairness Commission recommendation on the incentivisation of payment of the London Living Wage;
   (b) A breakdown on the use of the £720k entrepreneurship and business support grant within the borough.

2. That the Cabinet Member for House Building, Place Making and Development be requested to update the Committee on:
   (a) The dates that the independent viability study on the Wards Corner development was commissioned and received; and
   (b) Whether the grant given by the Bridge Renewal Trust to assist with the development on the Wards Corner site will need to be returned should the development not proceed.

## 66. GOOD ECONOMY RECOVERY PLAN, HIGH STREETS RECOVERY ACTION PLAN AND THE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

Peter O'Brien, Assistant Director for Regeneration and Economic Development, and Diane Southam, Head of Economic Development, introduced the Good Economy Recovery Plan for the borough. The impact of the pandemic on the borough had been amongst the severe in London, with a large numbers of people being either furloughed or made unemployed. Haringey was a borough of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and the sectors that many of them were in were amongst those hardest hit. The latest data showed a cautious level of growth but this represented businesses taking back some of the losses that they experienced in the past 15 months. The peak of unemployment was not expected to be reached until next year and the consequences of the pandemic were likely to felt for some time. There had been an increased demand for business support services and the Good Economy Recovery Plan (GERP) had been launched last year in response to it.

There were four elements to the GERP:

- Re-opening and supporting high streets and town centres;
- Supporting business through recovery and into renewal;
- Assisting residents into work and training; and
- Securing social and economic value through investments in communities and neighbourhoods.

The Committee noted the range of interventions that had been undertaken is support of the four elements of the GERP. The Chair reported that he had consulted Haringey Business Alliance regarding it. They stated that they had been consulted in the development of the GERP, were fully supportive of it and anxious for it to continue to be implemented.

Councillor Bull commented that it was important that empty shop units were targeted and they were a key reason why gambling operators moved in. He also stated that some of worst affected businesses were those that were not required to close during lockdown but whose trade had been badly impacted, such as dry cleaners. He also suggested that Broad Lane in Tottenham be considered for inclusion in the next phase of the Shutter Gallery. In response, Mr O'Brien stated that work was being undertaken to obtain an understanding of which business had been worst affected. Engagement and a business survey were being undertaken to inform this process.

## 67. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee noted that the scope and terms of reference of the forthcoming review on knife and gun crime would be circulated Committee Members and relevant officers for comment and would be submitted to the next meeting for final approval. This would not preclude work be started on the it. There were currently two items that had been requested that it was not possible to currently accommodate within the work plan. These were Brexit and Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the current work programmes for the main Committee and Scrutiny Panels be noted; and

2. That the scope and terms of reference for the review by the Adults and Health Panel's review on Sheltered Housing be approved.

CHAIR: Councillor Khaled Moyeed

Signed by Chair ……..

Date ……