

MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 20 JUNE, 2024, 7:00PM – 7:52PM

PRESENT: Councillors Lester Buxton, Sean O'Donovan, Barbara Blake (Chair), Reg Rice (Vice-Chair), Nicola Bartlett, John Bevan, Cathy Brennan and Alexandra Worrell

ALSO ATTENDING:

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Scott Emery and Councillor Imine Ibrahim.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / PRESENTATIONS / QUESTIONS

There were none.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED

To confirm and sign the minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 19 February 2024 as a correct record.

7. PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL 2023-24 UPDATE

Mr Robbie McNaugher Head of Development Management & Enforcement, introduced the report in relation to performance overview.

The meeting heard that:

- Decisions categorised as “excluded” from the figures were things like tree preservation orders and tree works in conservation areas. These were not monitored by the Government. Decisions on enforcement complaints not made within eight weeks were likely to have decisions made outside of the Haringey target, but sometimes it was just a case of data cleansing. Officers would sometimes do these in batches so it did not mean that decisions would be made out of time, but could do so.
- Referring all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to planning has become an aspect of the licensing process to ensure planning permission was in place. In the past, cases were only referred where there was a suspicion of no planning permission. All renewals were being submitted which allowed Planning to check the occupancy level. More investigation would be done if significant discrepancies were observed upon initial observation.
- It was generally the case that when somebody applied for a HMO licence, they also had to apply for planning permission. There was an Article 4 Direction which had excluded permitted development rights for HMOs in the east of the borough. This meant that the majority of HMOs needed planning permission. Outside of that area, it would be possible to convert a house to a ‘small HMO’
- Applications at Haringey worked similar to a taxi rank system. Once submitted, they would be allocated to an area where there was capacity within the team to consider them. Applications were taking, on average, 37 days to allocate. This had been reduced to 19. The manager was checking for previous history to make sure that if an officer had previously dealt with an application, the respective officer would be given the second application or whatever other kind of follow-up there was in relation to the application.
- Other councils operated a shorter validation process, but the approach at Haringey was to “front load” things, which may cause a delay at the start for validation, but it would still result in overall targets being hit as screening would be done in detail early in the process.
- A query was raised regarding how some councillors had been made aware that the local plan was moving to change the allocation of new housing which had been set in the past to ensure that more social housing was built in the west and the east and that this was no longer the case. Several councillors were not supportive of or aware that this change had been made. In response, the meeting heard that the current policy sought the same target percentage of affordable housing across the entire borough (40%). In relation to the new local plan, no decision had been taken yet. Based on discussions so far, the Council was not proposing to set a different housing target in different parts of the borough in terms of the target of affordable housing percentage. The current local plan aimed for a different tenure mix of affordable housing within the east of the borough and it was still open to a discussion about whether or not that remained the case, but no decisions had been taken and would not be taken for a number of months.

- In relation to backlog, the Council had started with 230 applications identified as backlog and then later determined the number to be 275. Some new backlog came into scope and this had been determined using the backlog funding.
- There were HMOs in Muswell Hill. This was west of the borough and there were a number of HMOs which were not licensed and needed to be as conditions were not ideal.
- In relation to the spend outlined on paragraph 5.35 of the report, the digital maturity assessment asked a range of questions to really look at how far advanced things were in terms of digital planning on certain issues. The Council had scored well on some things and less on others and was a decision of which of areas where there had been a low score would be where spend would be focused. The Council was only spending this funding on that project.
- The Planning department currently employed 12 agency staff and there was a corporate push to reduce that. It was hoped this would be halved to six in the next few months.
- Caseloads in comparison to other boroughs was probably about average. There was an attempt to run things more dynamically. The Council would sit with a batch of applications and allocate them more when there was a capacity within the team. This kept caseloads per officer slightly lower, but overall, the number was larger in total. Some authorities would have more than 60, but very few less than 60.

Mr Bryce Tudball, Head of Policy Transport and Infrastructure Planning, introduced the report in relation to the new local plan. The meeting heard that:

- A query was raised regarding the balance of social housing in the west and east of the borough, and concern that there were not very many brownfield sites necessarily in the west and it was more important to ensure that as much social housing as possible was built. In response, the meeting heard that the Council's adopted Housing Strategy was not produced by Mr Tudball's team, but did set out a strong preference for the delivery of social housing. This was the Council's adopted position. The starting point in relation to the local plan would be that the Council look to be consistent with this.
- A greyfield site would include, for instance, developed sites within the green belt. A typical example would be a location that fell technically in the green belt, but was a previously developed site. There were sites like that all across the country.
- It was important that the member working group was a good use of everyone's time. Based on previous conversations, there was a lot of consensus in relation to key topics such as housing, affordable housing, the local economy or the climate emergency. In some cases, there may be new evidence that needed to be brought which may help facilitate a more granular conversation. Future discussions would be based around sites where the Council would think very carefully about what it wanted to deliver to neighbourhoods.
- In terms of sites, the starting point was to identify sites that may be available for development in the future. Although Haringey was a small borough, the Council had a relatively good idea of what sites may be available in the future. A second call for sites had been made. The next stage was around site assessment and this involved

thinking carefully about what could be delivered on these sites and if the proposed developments were the best outcomes. Historically, it had been a more manual task. However, explorations were being made to see if technology could help facilitate a quicker process so the £120,000 (outlined in paragraph 5.46 and 5.47 of the report) was principally to cover the licensing of buying in this technology that could do the assessments much quicker. The outlined £60,000 was about backfilling the time involved in people in Mr Tudball's team delivering the project. There was also some specialist support the Council may need around design. The Council would also like the tool or the project to look at whether outcomes on sites were financially viable.

- It would be possible for the Committee to receive a demonstration of the technology in use at the new member working group.
- Efforts would be made to get a Cabinet decision on the local plan by the end of the year. Whether or not it was possible to go out for consultation before the end of the year would depend on a few things, but the aim would be to get the Cabinet decision in November or December 2024.

Mr Denis Ioannou, Head of Building Control Services, introduced the report in relation to building control. The meeting heard that:

- The Council was going through the competency process to ensure that it had competent staff under the new regime to be able to perform the function on the new regulations. The Council was also looking at its Quality Management Systems to enable the Council to report back to the Building Safety Regulator so that it would not be seen as a risk borough which would leave the Council subject to investigation.
- In terms of having registered inspectors, the Council had one 'Class 3' individual already registered as an inspector and three that were awaiting results from exams. The Committee would be advised of the results when available.
- Concerns were raised regarding the job re-evaluation process. Discussions would be held with officers and the Chair regarding the issues. An update would be circulated by email within a few weeks and further updated at the next Strategic Planning Committee meeting.
- Discussions had taken place with the Legal and HR teams to see what support they could offer in terms of the building safety regulator's enforcement.
- An update would also be provided on the phone box removals.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of urgent business.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting would take place on 17 October 2024.

CHAIR: Councillor Barbara Blake

Signed by Chair

Date