

Minutes of the Environment and Housing Scrutiny Panel 8th January 2013

Present: Cllrs Alexander, Bloch, Gibson, McNamara (Chair), Stanton and Weber

Also present: Cllr Bevan

Attending: Daliah Barrett (Lead Licensing Officer), Ann Cunningham (Head Traffic Management), Phil Harris (Assistant Director, Adults and Housing), Eubert Malcolm (Enforcement Response Manager), Stephen McDonnell (Assistant Director, Single Front Line), Eamon McGoldrick (Director of Housing Management), Chris Roberts-Wray (Team Leader Parking Projects) and Gary Weston (Parking Infrastructure Manager).

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Cllr Canver

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Cllr Stanton declared an interest as a board member of Homes for Haringey and would thus exclude himself from housing related items on the agenda.

3. Urgent Business.

3.1 None received.

4. Minutes of previous meetings

24th September (Waste and recycling)

4.1 The panel sought to clarify how issues that were not resolved by the waste contractor (Veolia) were dealt with. It was noted that in most instances, such cases were brought to the attention of Single Front Line Service via a local Councillor when further investigation would then take place.

4.2 The panel noted one instance (Jacksons Lane) where waste collections had been missed in 6 of the past 10 weeks and although this had been rectified each week, missed collections continued to occur. It was noted that Single Front Line were aware of this specific case and had been escalated with Veolia management to help resolve this ongoing problem. The panel noted that both the Refuse Manager and the Recycling Manager had visited affected householders to apologise.

4.3 To ensure that all actions agreed by the panel were followed up, it was suggested that the action points should be confirmed with the Chair and a subsequent list circulated to the Panel and attending officers.

Agreed: Action points that arise from the business of future meetings should be tabulated and distributed to relevant officers and panel members. Actions will be monitored by the panel at future meetings.

4.4 The panel agreed the minutes of the panel meetings of the 24th September and the 4 December.

5. Budget Scrutiny

- 5.1 The panel noted and agreed the recommendations approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in December 2012. The panel noted that these recommendations would be collated (with recommendations from other scrutiny panels and the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee) and submitted to Cabinet for consideration in February 2013.

6. Cabinet Member Questions – Cllr Bevan, Housing

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing (Cllr Bevan) responded to questions from panel members. The following is a summary of the key issues discussed by the panel.
- 6.2 Members of the panel sought to assess whether homes within the Sheridan housing complex (N8) were on the reserve list and likely to be upgraded within Decent Homes Programme. The Cabinet member indicated that

Agreed: That a short note is circulated to the panel regarding Sheridan Housing (N8) and inclusion within the Decent Homes Programme.

- 6.3 The panel discussed the improvements being made to social housing within the Decent Homes Programme. The panel sought further clarification as to whether individual homes that were assessed to need a range of improvements could have individual elements of this work prioritised for completion in the works schedule (e.g. a property may need a new kitchen and double glazing, but tenant would like to prioritise double glazing).

Agreed: That a short briefing to be provided to the panel on the Decent Homes Programme (works schedule and priorities).

- 6.4 The panel discussed the problem of ASB in social housing and the impact that this had on neighbouring local residents and communities. The panel noted that there was a prescribed process that officers follow to resolve such problems, and depending on the circumstances of individual cases, this can be a lengthy process. The panel noted that if the property had been sublet, the Council may need to obtain the consent of the named tenancy holder for appropriate enforcement action.
- 6.5 The panel noted the action that Homes for Haringey (HfH) has taken to identify and remove those tenants that sublet their property as this is in contravention of their tenancy agreement. It was noted that HfH undertakes systematic occupancy checks on around 20% of properties it manages per year. In addition, the service will also investigate possible tenancy contraventions as identified by members of the public.
- 6.6 The panel noted that there had been a significant increase in the identification and repossession of properties that had been sublet in Haringey: in 2011/12, 12 such properties were repossessed, though data for 2012/13 would suggest a threefold increase (27 cases at 9 months).

Agreed: The panel requested a short briefing on the occupancy check process and recent amendments made to make this process more robust.

7. Resident Scrutiny Panels (and scrutiny at Homes for Haringey)

Scrutiny

- 7.1 The Director of Housing Management presented a briefing on scrutiny arrangements in Homes for Haringey (HfH). The panel noted that in addition to the Environment and Housing Scrutiny Panel, scrutiny is also undertaken by a number of HfH bodies which include the Performance Committee and the newly formed Residents Scrutiny Panel.
- 7.2 The Resident Scrutiny Panel aims to provide a residents perspective (both tenants and leaseholders) of the services being provided through Homes for Haringey. The Resident Scrutiny Panel had completed a pilot review of the Winter Maintenance Programme and is currently assessing the Repairs Service (report 2013).
- 7.3 The Performance Committee of HfH meets five times per annum and has agreed to scrutinise one topic (central to its core business) at each meeting. In addition, a small number of topics will be looked at in greater depth throughout the course of the year.
- 7.4 The panel agreed that it would be helpful if the Chairs of all three scrutiny bodies were to meet in the near future as this would provide an opportunity to discuss and plan future scrutiny work plans. The panel hoped that this would contribute to the development of a more coordinated approach to the scrutiny of housing issues in Haringey. The meeting would also help to map out the areas of scrutiny responsibility of each body and which housing bodies are being held to account, aiming to learn more about the work of other panels and avoid duplication of effort.

Agreed: That the Chairs of each of the scrutiny bodies meet to discuss current and planned scrutiny work, housing bodies held to account and ways in which these bodies may collaborate in the future (February 2013).

- 7.5 The panel also agreed that it would be helpful to know the current membership of the Homes for Haringey Board.

Agreed: That the membership of the Homes for Haringey Board is circulated to the panel.

Waste and recycling issues

- 7.6 The panel discussed the issue of waste and recycling collection on local social housing estates and measures that could be adopted to help increase recycling. (This had been an issue arising from other work of the panel in respect of the new waste and recycling collection system). From this discussion, there appeared to be two key issues:
- Recycling rates were low (structural issues with estates);
 - The number of paladin bins on estates (there were perceived to be too many).
- 7.7 Single Front Line noted that the challenges of recycling on estates was widely recognised and that there was a need to increase the recycling participation rate and the amount of waste which households recycled. Single Front Line also reported to the panel that:
- There was a need to rationalise waste receptacles;

- Increased frequency of waste collection would result in increased costs;
- Capital investment was needed to upgrade container sites;
- £600k had been received from Department of Communities and Local Government to roll out food waste collection on local estates.

7.8 It was noted that the panel intended to complete the second phase of its work with the waste and recycling service over the coming months and would need to develop and agree outcomes for this. In addition to work on local council housing estates, this would encompass the broader policy options for increasing recycling rates (e.g. incentive schemes or enforcement options). The panel requested that key services are consulted in developing objectives for the second part of its recycling work.

Agreed: That Single Front Line and Housing services are consulted to identify specific outcomes for possible inclusion within part 2 of waste and collection review (Feb 2013).

Estate Inspections

7.9 The Director of Housing Management presented a briefing on estate inspections within Homes for Haringey (HfH). It was noted that managing external areas in estates (e.g. pavement repairs, parking enforcement, street cleaning) was challenging because of the number of different services and contractors involved.

7.10 The panel noted that there were 37 Tenancy Management Officers (TMO) who lead local estate inspections to identify issues of concern and to plan any remedial action necessary. Local councillors are notified and invited to attend such inspections.

7.11 In evidence submitted by HfH and confirmed from their own experience, panel members noted that there were a number of weaknesses within the current estate inspection system:

- The number of works left outstanding from one inspection to another;
- A lack of staff experience / expertise to ensure that appropriate action can be taken to ensure the completion of identified works (who and where to go for problem resolution);
- TMOs do not have access to a budget (capital/ revenue) for estate repairs which may impede works completion;
- Services are not flexible enough to respond to minor repairs/ problems.

7.12 In recognition of the above, HFH planned to make a number of improvements to the inspection system to be effective from April 2013. These included:

- Establishment of four Quality Assurance Officers who will:
 - Monitor client contracts (e.g. Veolia, Wing, caretaking, cleaning)
 - Lead estate walkabouts (greater consistency and more accurate specification of work required and completion)
- Dedicated estate environmental budget for housing management
- Increase capital funding from £250k to £500k for small / medium environmental improvements
- Establish a mobile operative team (2 operatives and vehicle) to undertake small works (e.g. chute clearance, graffiti removal, removal of signage)
- Estate service officers will be provided with appropriate equipment to undertake minor repairs without recourse to a more formal works order.

- 7.13 The panel noted that surveyors often accompanied TMO's on estate inspections which it was suggested, could be indicative of TMO's lack of confidence in identifying works needed and any necessary corrective actions. It was noted that within the proposed changes (outlined above) Quality Assurance Officers will have more expertise and experience which will negate the need for surveyors.
- 7.14 The panel welcomed the planned changes for the estate inspection process and hoped that these would deliver improved and speedier outcomes for local estate residents.

8. Cabinet Member Questions – Cllr Canver

Q & A

- 8.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Canver who was unwell and unable to attend the meeting.

Waste and recycling recommendations – part 1

- 8.2 The panel noted that the recommendations from the interim report on the waste and recycling service had been presented to Cabinet in November and a response provided at its December meeting. It was noted that with the exception of two, all recommendations had been accepted by Cabinet.
- 8.3 The panel were concerned about the process through which scrutiny panel recommendations were approved. It was noted that at present, recommendations of the panel need to be agreed by the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee and subsequently presented and approved by Cabinet. It was the view of the panel that this process was lengthy and may not be responsive or flexible enough to respond to recommendations made.
- 8.4 The panel agreed that whilst recommendations that affected council policy should obtain Cabinet approval, those recommendations which were operational in nature could be approved by the Cabinet member themselves through a more informal process. The panel indicated that if such a two tier system could be agreed, this would help to create a more streamlined decision making process.

Agreed: That the Chair of the Environment & Housing Scrutiny Panel would approach the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny and the Chairs of other scrutiny panels to indentify and agree new arrangements for approval of recommendations. This can then be followed by a meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the full Cabinet.

- 8.5 The panel noted that there had been some problems with the Christmas collection times with waste and recycling not being collected on the specified dates. The panel understood that this problem was due to issues with the Veolia website which was not sophisticated enough to include Bank Holidays and therefore displayed inaccurate collection dates.

Agreed: The panel agreed that on future Bank Holidays, if the Veolia website could not be updated appropriately a 'special notice' should be placed on the website informing residents of clear up arrangements.

8.6 The panel acknowledged that Single Front Line had been very supportive of its work with the new waste and collection recycling service and had responded quickly to issues raised. It was agreed that Single Front Line would provide an update to the panel (briefing/ future panel meeting) on its agreed recommendations and on the cases study areas where the panel visited.

Agreed: That an update be provided on the implementation of the waste and recycling recommendations (part 1) and on the case study areas visited by the panel (briefing at next meeting).

9. Integrating Council Enforcement Functions

9.1 Officers from Single Front Line, Enforcement Response and Licensing presented the report on integrating council enforcement functions and responded to questions from the panel. A summary of the main points of this discussion is given below.

9.2 It was noted that in total (including both new and variations) approximately 90 licensing applications are received each year. Licensing and Planning services adhere to two different regulatory codes which may appear to give rise to 'contradictory' conditions. For example, where an application is received to extend the licensing hours of a license that go beyond those agreed under planning conditions. It was noted that in 2012, there were 7 occasions when the premises did not have the appropriate planning permission.

9.3 The panel heard that all licensing applications are routinely sent to Responsible Authorities to comment on the proposed application. The panel noted that there are a number of Responsible Authorities that are consulted within the licensing process and these include:

- Police Authority
- Fire Authority
- Planning
- Health & Safety
- Food Protection
- Director of Public Health
- Social Services (Child Protection)
- Building Control
- Trading Standards
- Noise Enforcement

9.4 The panel noted that in order for evidence to be considered from a Responsible Authority (or any other interested party, including members of the public) this must be relevant to the application being considered and relate to the four licensing objectives, which are:

- the prevention of crime and disorder;
- public safety;
- the prevention of public nuisance;
- and the protection of children from harm.

9.6 The panel heard that Responsible Authorities will respond to applications where appropriate. The panel indicated that it would like to receive a summary of licensing application responses received from Responsible Authorities, especially any other departments of the council and the metropolitan Police.

Agreed: That a short briefing is provided to the panel on local Responsible Authorities detailing:

- the responses received from Responsible Authorities to licensing applications from Jan 2010-Jan2013.
- contact details for Responsible Authorities.

9.7 The panel noted that although there was not a central register where all Responsible Authorities could enter enforcement data for local premises, a Council wide database (M3) was used. Here data could be recorded on a wide range of enforcement issues (including data used for regulatory and enforcement purposes as well as 'softer data' (e.g. waste). Services which used this include Health & Safety, Licensing, Trading Standards, Food Safety and Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams).

9.8 The panel noted that to ensure that there is no conflict of interest the Licensing Officer must remain neutral in the licensing application process. This places some restrictions on the nature and level of information that can be exchanged. However, the Licensing Officer does maintain an overview of information submitted and if a trend appears (e.g. in respect of particular premises) it may have a 'generalised discussion' with another enforcement body (e.g. police) or another council department who are not obliged to be neutral.

9.9 In terms of advice available to residents within the licensing process, the panel noted that although there was no formal advice service applicant's advice notes are published and available through the Council website. A booklet 'The Licensing Law and You' is also available on the website. The panel also noted that where appropriate, mediation meetings were encouraged with residents (other interested parties).

9.10 The panel noted that the broader public perception may not recognise the legal duties of enforcement officers across the council which may inhibit their ability to share information and limit or constrain the degree to which they may work together. The panel were of the view that more should be done to inform and educate local residents about the roles of local enforcement teams and how their help can be solicited.

Agreed: That all Responsible Authorities and other Council departments with enforceable functions are consulted as part of the scope for the Environment and Housing Scrutiny Panel scope of strategic enforcement (Feb 2013).

10. Strategic parking issues ahead of the Tottenham Hotspur redevelopment

Scoping Report

10.1 The panel discussed the proposed objectives and associated work plans as set out in the scoping report. A summary of the key issues discussed by the panel is presented below.

10.2 The panel indicated that as the new Tottenham Hotspur development was billing itself as a leisure destination for 365 days a year, this should be reflected in parking controls and broader traffic management arrangements. Officers indicated that

Traffic Management would continue to monitor the situation and adapt parking or traffic controls as necessary.

10.3 The operation of the Blue Badge mobility scheme on match days was also discussed by the panel. As there are less parking restrictions for Blue Badge holders there was a concern that this could be exploited through incorrect or fraudulent use of badges. It was suggested that this should be included within the scope. Officers from Traffic Management indicated that it would not be viable (self financing) to employ a dedicated Blue Badge monitoring officer.

Agreed: That a briefing is prepared on the operation of the Blue Badge scheme in Haringey together with monitoring and fraud identification processes.

10.4 The panel noted that there had been some discussion on the proposed supermarket and the possibility of football fans being able to use the car park on match days. This car park had a capacity for 400 cars.

10.5 The panel noted that there was often spare capacity at Bury Road Car Park (400 spaces) and discussed whether this could be used as a parking solution on Tottenham Hotspur match days. It was suggested that this could be marketed as a park and ride scheme which would have the added benefit of attracting additional footfall to Wood Green High Road. Parking Service officers indicated that they would consider this option when assessing a range of parking options for the area.

Agreed: That two additional objectives be included within the parking scope: 1) Assess parking restrictions around schools 2) Use of Blue Badge scheme on match days.

Agreed: That given the scope of the work and the inclusion of additional objectives, the timescales for the planned work should be discussed with the Traffic Management service and amended accordingly.

Phillip Lane Walkabout

10.6 Officers from Traffic Management presented the findings from a walkabout that was conducted on Phillip Lane (Tottenham) with the Chair of the EHSP and 5 other Councillors from Tottenham, West Green and Bruce Grove Wards in December 2012. The aim of this walkabout was to identify possible improvements to parking and traffic management schemes and to ascertain if this could be a viable approach for road traffic solutions across the Tottenham area as part of the review being undertaken by the panel.

10.7 The panel noted that 32 issues were identified for rectification or adjustment from this walkabout. Those issues identified included:

- Unnecessary double yellow lines which may prohibit business use;
- Removal of conflicting signage
- Faded yellow lines (double or single);
- Bus stop 'box' too large;
- Bus stop 'box' faded;
- Controlled parking space on a bend in the road (safety issue).

10.8 The panel noted that whilst some of the identified works or improvements could be enacted at minimal cost, other solutions would require additional capital/ revenue spend by the service. The panel also indicated that it would be useful to have an indication of the order in which identified issues may need to be addressed (i.e. safety). As a next step, the panel indicated that it would be helpful if Traffic Management could identify what resources would be needed to implement those actions identified from the walkabout.

Agreed: That Traffic Management should indicate what resources would be required to correct 32 traffic/parking issues identified from the Phillip Lane walkabout together with and priorities for action and completion timescales.

10.9 The panel noted that it would be important to publicise the assessments of this walkabout and any actions implemented as a result. The panel noted that once further information was available (i.e. resource data) it would assess the viability of this approach as a process to help identify local traffic and parking solutions more widely across Tottenham.

10.10 The panel confirmed that it would be talking to parking services in other local authorities as part of its evidence gathering to help meet the scrutiny objectives set out in the agreed scoping report.

11. Waste and recycling

11.1 The panel discussed the Cabinet response to its recommendations within item 8. There was insufficient time for the panel to receive the presentation on updated consultation responses from the waste and recycling survey and the cabinet member for Environment was not present. A copy of the presentation would be distributed with the finalised minutes.

12. Work programme report

12.1 The panel noted the work programme report.

13. Future meetings

13.1 The next meeting of the panel was confirmed to be at 18.30 on the 21st March 2013.