

## **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 8 NOVEMBER 2005**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors \*Bull (Chair) \*Harris (Vice-Chair), \*Bevan, \*J Brown, \*Davies, Dawson, and Winskill.

**Co-optees:** Mr. B. Aulsberry and \*Mrs. I Shukla (REJCC non-voting Representatives) Mrs. C Bhangwandeem plus 2 Vacancies (parent governors), Ms S. Berkery-Smith and L. Haward (Church Representatives).

\* Members Present

### **SC77. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence received from Cllr Winskill.

### **SC78. MINUTES:** 11 October 2005 and 24 October 2005

#### **RESOLVED:**

- i) That the minutes of the 11 October 2005 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.
- ii) That the minutes of the 24 October 2005 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

### **SC79. BUDGET SCRUTINY** (Report of the Director of Finance & Director of Housing) (Agenda Item 7)

The Executive Member for Housing, Cllr Diakides, gave a brief introduction highlighting the two categories into which spending was divided, these being housing strategy and needs and housing ALMO services. The transition to the ALMO has led to a more ambitious agenda, with emphasis being placed on achieving a CPA two-star rating. The Executive Member highlighted the three main challenges faced by Housing Services. The housing revenue account will in the long run develop a gap between resources and expenditure due to loss of stock from right to buy and changes in government regulations, and Housing Services are working with Finance to avoid any potential problems. The repairs response unit, a need driven service which deals with 63,000 repairs per annum, has a projected overspend, which currently stands at 900k. The Government has also introduced a new system for housing capital allocations, which will lead to a substantial reduction in funding.

The Committee asked a number of questions regarding the report. The rent collection figure of 97% was queried and it was commented that the total figure represented a combination of rent owed over the year and all arrears, so the 97% figure meant that all annual rent had been collected, and the figure had

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increased to this level due to further arrears also being collected. The revenue from right to buy sales was discussed, and it was commented that these monies did not necessarily remain in the Housing Directorate, but could be moved to pay for other Council priorities. The need to achieve the CPA two-star rating by implementing the ALMO was emphasised as this would be the only way of gaining the £128m capital investment from the Government. The issue of new units of affordable housing was raised and it was commented that 1000 units would be delivered after the winning of a £70m bid last year. These units would be delivered in partnership with RSLs as there are not sufficient funds from the Council alone for the building of new stock. The refurbishment of Apex House was raised and it was commented that Housing would pay for the three floors covered by 200 staff in the strategy and needs unit. The water pressure reduction works were discussed, and it was commented that Haringey and Thames Water were in ongoing discussions over the level of investment needed from Thames Water. The issue of reducing void rates was raised and it was commented that the proposed reduction was realistic and the void rate turnaround was now around 40 days. The issue of savings produced from streamlined rent procedures was raised and the Executive Member commented that the simpler processes mentioned in the report would be detailed to Members before 12 December 2005.

The issue of additional posts being created for the ALMO was discussed. The Committee expressed its concern over the creation of new posts as it appeared that the Council would be subsidising the ALMO and creating more bureaucracy. The Executive Member for Housing commented that the budget was balanced due to compensatory savings elsewhere. It was agreed that a report on staffing for the ALMO would be prepared by Housing Services to answer the concerns raised by the Committee by 12 December 2005.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee approved the financial planning position set out in the report and the pre-business plan reviews covering Strategy and Needs and Housing ALMO Services. Concerns were noted over the number of new posts created for the ALMO, and it was agreed that a report would be prepared covering the ALMO recruitment costs before 12 December 2005.

**SC80. BUDGET SCRUTINY** (Report of the Director of Finance & Director of Environmental Services) (Agenda Item 6)

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The Director of Environmental Services passed on apologies from the Executive Member for Environment & Conservation, and introduced the report. The report covered the following business units: Streetscene, Enforcement, Recreation and PEPPs. The cost base had changed due to higher expectations and more people in the borough, and the budget concentrated on the Council's priorities.

The Committee raised a number of issues regarding the report. The issue of participation in the organic waste collection scheme was raised, and it was commented that the next user survey after Christmas would pick these figures up. The issue of permit schemes for utilities road work was raised, and it was commented that the Council agrees in advance what is expected in each instance. The issue of allotments was raised, and it was commented that there was a need to improve access to plots, and it was commented that the findings of the Scrutiny Review of Allotments could inform next year's business plan.

The issue of funding for improvements to Tottenham Leisure Centre was raised, and it was commented that the funding for this had been raised through prudential borrowing, for which the regulations had only come into place in that past year. The proposed funding figure for the Borough Spending Plan was raised, and it was commented that this was a bid to Transport for London, and the exact figure received would be known in December. The issue of spending on solar power was raised, and it was commented that savings would be made in the long-term, and that it would be a step forward in the Council's goal of improved sustainability.

The issue of funding new Controlled Parking Zones was raised and it was commented that there would be income from the selling of permits and that CPZs were a popular measure. The Next Day Fix scheme was discussed, and the Committee commented on the amount of revenue invested in a scheme that they had concerns over the quality of repairs and the monitoring of the work undertaken. It was commented that the Council was monitoring the work and additional investment was required to improve this and expand the scheme. It was agreed that Committee Members would be informed of repairs taking place in a report before 12 December 2005.

The issue of the publicity spend on the Better Haringey programme was raised, and Councillor Davies's concerns over the increase in this figure were noted. The proposed increase in allotment premium charges was discussed, and the Committee commented that the running cost of allotments roughly equated

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to the revenue from current allotment charges. The Director of Environmental Services representative commented that improvements could be made to allotments with increased revenue. Councillor Davies, seconded by Councillor Bull, moved that the proposed increases in allotment charges be withdrawn from the spending plan as it would pre-empt the outcome of the Scrutiny Review of Allotments, and on a vote this was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee approved the financial planning position set out in the report and the pre-business plan reviews covering Streetscene business unit, Enforcement business unit, Recreation business unit and the PEPPS business unit with the exception of New Cashable Efficiency Saving no.3, Increased Allotment Premium Charges. It was agreed that this would be postponed pending the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Allotments. Concerns were noted over the quality of repairs under the Next Day Fix system, and it was agreed that a report would be prepared covering the Next Day Fix system before 12 December 2005.

**SC81. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEMBER REQUESTS (Agenda Item 8)**

**RESOLVED:**

That Members' requests from the meeting of 8 November 2005 be added to the list and an update on progress be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

**SC82. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS (Agenda Item 9)**

There were no new items of urgent business.

**Notes:**

The meeting ended at 22:00HRS

**Councillor Gideon Bull  
Chair – Overview & Scrutiny Committee**