

HRSP Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th July 2015

Attendees: Cllr Akwasi- Ayisi, Cllr Engert, Cllr Newton, Cllr Gunes, Cllr Ibrahim and Cllr Griffiths.

Council Officers: Astrid Kjellberg-Obst, Stephen Kelly and Dan Hawthorn.

1. Filming at meetings

- 1.1 This was noted by the panel.

2. Apologies

- 2.1 Apologies were received from panel member Cllr Tim Gallagher and Cllr Strickland for item 8.

3. Urgent Business

- 3.1 No items were received.

4. Declarations of interest

- 4.1 None received.

5. Deputations

- 5.1 None received.

6. Minutes of the last meeting

- 6.1 In respect of matters arising from the minutes, the panel noted that the AD for Social Regeneration of Tottenham and AD for Tottenham Regeneration had been requested to attend a future meeting by the previous panel. It was agreed that this could be encompassed within the new work programme (2015/16) if the panel so wished (e.g. update for Corporate Programmes).
- 6.2 The panel noted that only one member of the panel was able to visit customer services and the housing options team at Apex House in March when this was scheduled. The panel indicated that that would like to arrange a further visit, given that this was an important area of work which could inform the work programme for 2015/16.

Agreed: that a visit by the HRSP to Customer Services and Housing Options Team would be arranged.

- 6.3 It was noted that an interim report on Selective Licensing would be available at the end of April/ May 2015. It was agreed that a further update would be provided to the panel on the council's approach to selective licensing in light of

recent judicial reviews. Update date to be agreed with officers and incorporated within work programme planning.

Agreed: That an update on the Councils plans to introduce Selective Licensing Scheme is given to the panel in this year's work programme (date to be agreed between officers and Chair).

6.4 The minutes were approved.

7. Terms of reference

7.1 The panel noted that the main Overview & Scrutiny Committee agrees the terms of reference for each of the scrutiny panels and this was to be noted by the panel.

7.2 The key policy areas covered by the scrutiny panel were noted together with the relevant Cabinet member portfolios who would attend.

7.3 The terms of reference were duly noted by the panel.

8.0 Cabinet Q & A

8.1 The Cabinet member for Housing and Regeneration was unable to attend due to family illness and sent his apologies.

8.2 The panel noted that according to protocol, that Cabinet Members attend relevant scrutiny panels twice in each municipal year.

8.3 It was agreed to reschedule the attendance of the Cabinet member for a future meeting of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Panel.

8.4 Although the Cabinet member was not present, officers agreed to provide a written response to questions from the panel in respect of the housing infill programme. These were:

1. To provide an update timetable for progress on the Phase 1a infill programme;
2. The extent to which Phase 1a of the infill programme is funded through RTB receipts;
3. How much have construction costs increased for Phase 1a of the infill programme;
4. The position of 82 Muswell Hill Place (outright sale property to provide cross-subsidy)
5. What is the timetable for the phase 2 infill programme;
6. Will the new council rented properties be at target rents on a par with existing council stock, or at higher Affordable rents?

Agreed: That officers would provide written responses to the panel.

9. Corporate Priority 4

- 9.1 The panel received a presentation from the AD for Planning Services on the councils planned actions to address Priority 4 within the Council's Corporate Plan; "Drive growth and employment from which everyone can benefit". It was intended that this presentation would provide a corporate context that would inform the panel's selection of work topics.
- 9.2 The panel noted that the proposed structure for the priority boards and how they will operate is at present conceptual at present. The panel would be interested to see how these boards operate in practice and the outcomes achieved. The panel would be keen to see the minutes of these boards if these were to be publicly available (this is yet to be determined).
- 9.3 The panel asked about the delivery of local infrastructure, where it was felt that this was often underplayed in local housing and regeneration plans, particularly health and education infrastructure. The panel noted that local priorities and governance arrangements (e.g. priority boards) will aim to develop a more coherent response to local infrastructure needs. Part of this process will be external facing, for example, lobbying national bodies.
- 9.4 In relation to the funding of Cross Rail 2, the panel noted that it was not clear if there would be any local contribution via the Community infrastructure Levy. Latest discussions centre on a number of funding options including the continuation of the current Cross Rail CIL (or increase it) or the develop funding through The Treasury or London mayoral precept. There is also the possibility that it could be funded through indirect local taxation, business rates or council tax. The question is not whether London will contribute, but how London will contribute.
- 9.5 The panel discussed the merits of using the proposed RAG rating system to underpin priority monitoring. The panel were of the view that whilst this allowed an overview of corporate performance, this did not always provide the necessary detail that was required. The panel acknowledged that there was also a difficult balance to be struck between providing the level of detail required for monitoring whilst ensuring that monitoring processes were accessible (e.g. compiling long detailed monitoring reports).

10. Corporate Priority 5

- 10.1 The panel received a presentation from the AD for Regeneration on the councils planned actions to address Priority 5 within the Council's Corporate Plan; "Create homes and communities where people choose to live and are able to thrive." It was intended that this presentation would provide a corporate context that would inform the panel's selection of work topics.

10.2 The panel noted that the Council is currently developing its own housing strategy which is a more detailed expression of priority 5. The consultation for this strategy has just commenced. There are 4 key outcomes that the council is trying to achieve in respect of priority 4 and all of the housing activities of officers should be directed towards these outcomes.

10.3 Three key programmes to help meet these objectives were outlined to the panel:

- housing transformation programme – including the future of Homes for Haringey;
- Council new build programme;
- Estate regeneration.

10.4 There was some panel discussion on the social dividend within this priority, in that housing was not just about housing but also about the people that live in these homes. That is it can achieve social objectives using housing development as a tool. In the example of estate renewal, there is a duty upon the council to minimise the negative impact on the local community, but also to maximise the development opportunities as well.

10.5 The panel noted some examples of how the council (via Homes for Haringey) provides a social dividend through the provision of housing services; it was noted that through its work in identifying those at risk from the benefit cap HfH had helped to provide job seeking advice and support. In many cases it's helping to identify those in need, and coordinating support. Other ways also include environmental projects on estates which now only help to improve the area, but contribute to peoples well being (e.g. through community involvement and engagement).

10.6 In respect of estate renewal, the panel noted that resident consultation and involvement is of paramount importance to help understand the needs and aspirations of local communities, but also to help co-produce final outcomes.

11. Work programme

11.1 Members of the panel discussed possible items to include within the work programme from those issues prioritised through the Scrutiny Cafe process. A summary of these discussions with those areas selected for review is highlighted below.

11.2 A number of suggestions were put forward by the panel which merited further examination within scrutiny, but which did not fall within the remit of this panel: equalities impact assessments and post 16 education and training pathways. It was agreed that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, under whose remit these suggestions fall, would be notified these issues and considered within the work programme of that body.

Agreed: That the following issues be suggested for Overview & Scrutiny for consideration in its work programme:

- Equalities impact assessments
- Post 16 education pathways

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 11.3 The panel discussed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and governance arrangements for allocations and spending. It was noted that where there was a neighbourhood plan, the local community would receive 25% of CIL income, but otherwise 10% would be given over to community interests. It was felt that scrutiny, by taking evidence from other boroughs, could help to provide a comparative insight as to what systems should be in place for the allocation of community funding through the CIL to ensure the most effective use of this limited resource.
- 11.4 The panel noted that, unlike S106 monies, CIL money is not allocated to specific projects. The requirement for CIL is that monies must be spent on growth, but as it's not likely to be massive amounts of money, it may be best used as an enabling fund to help secure much larger resources for growth and development (e.g. seed corn). For example, in respect of developing new health facilities, NHS England require a planning permission before they will release money to develop new facilities, but it is not clear who pays for the planning permission. So in Tottenham at the moment, the council is funding planning permissions so that the NHS board can consider a new site for a surgery (which will eventually be refunded retrospectively).
- 11.5 Given that CIL receipts are anticipated to be between £1-1.5 million to cover all infrastructure, then it is probably best if this receipt is used as an enabling fund to secure much larger funds to support infrastructure ambitions.
- 11.6 It was suggested that the 'scrutiny in a day' approach to this project could work best for this project as it would enable all stakeholders to hear evidence presented and to come to conclusions on the day. This could involve informed authorities and professional organisations including:
- Planning officers Society
 - LB Redbridge
 - LB Croydon
 - Milton Keynes.
- 11.7 As there have been requests for money from local community groups through the CIL it was noted that this project should be taken as early as possible within the work programme.

Agreed: that the HRSP undertake a project to look at CIL allocations and that this is scoped with officers.

Ensuring that development caters for local employment needs

- 11.8 This was a prioritised project coming from the scrutiny cafe discussions. It was noted that the market position is that it would be very unlikely that money would be lent to build employment space as rents would be insufficient to cover the costs of building. It is very difficult to set a blanket policy as there are so many site specific considerations as well as assessing other financial and other trade offs (e.g. provision of affordable housing, CIL), so the panel understood that it may be best left to the Planning Committee as a requirement to provide affordable employment may be made at the expense of provision affordable housing.
- 11.9 The panel noted that the Council is trying to introduce a policy for this purpose and has been consulting upon it. In addition, it was not clear how scrutiny could improve local outcomes given that much of the decision making framework (NPPF) and fields of influence (e.g. debt markets) occur at the national level.
- 11.10 The panel noted that, further to recent changes to national planning framework, there is potential to lose designated office space to residential development. It was reported that whilst this was a problem in many other boroughs (particularly those in central London with lots of office buildings) there had been very few conversion applications in Haringey.
- 11.11 The panel discussed the availability of small business spaces to help start up companies as these were important to the local economy. It was noted that Camden had established an Article 4 Direction in some areas to prevent the loss of business space and the panel may wish to assess what impact this had there.
- 11.12 It was also noted that the timescale for scrutiny involvement in this area would be limited given that given that the timescale for the next presentation and sign off of the local plan would mitigate against scrutiny involvement as no new policies could be introduced after its agreement. So whilst scrutiny could look at this issue, it may not precipitate change in local planning policy.
- 11.13 It was noted that Cllr Sahota was undertaking some work in developing business opportunities and that any scrutiny work should not overlap with this. It was agreed to write to Cllr Sahota to establish if there was any area which scrutiny could further contribute.

Agreed: the panel would write to Cllr Sahota (and relevant Cabinet member) to establish whether the possibility of undertaking any further work in respect of availability of small business spaces.

Housing Viability Assessment

- 11.14 The panel discussed housing variability assessments and the delivery of affordable housing. This is an issue which is grappled with locally via the

planning committee on a regular basis, and the panel may be able to assist in identifying further options, in particular how other authorities are approaching this, particularly across London.

- 11.15 Housing Viability Assessments are now a consideration in planning and thus are instrumental in planning decisions. It is an imperfect tool and unlikely to get a straight answer as HVA are based on the interpretation of the evidence presented by developers. It may be beneficial to look at this issue to:
- Ascertain what other authorities are doing to inform local practice;
 - Bring greater transparency;
 - Help to instil member confidence (support Planning Committee);
 - Improve public understanding and confidence in the system;
- 11.16 It was suggested that it may be useful to include the following stakeholders in this work:
- Representatives from the developers;
 - Representatives from other local authorities;
 - Agents who undertake HVA's;
 - Specialist informants.
- 11.17 The panel noted that HVA is tied to the provision of affordable housing, as there is always a trade off between the desired policy outcomes (e.g. 40% of build as affordable) and proposed viability statements provided by developers. It would be helpful to understand how other authorities, particularly who may be achieving better outcomes, approach this issue. Thus a scrutiny in this area may help to bring an independent assessment of the issue, and bring about improved understanding and confidence together with practical developments that may contribute to improved HVA outcomes.

Housing related issues - Older people's housing

- 11.18 The panel discussed older peoples housing as a possible area to incorporate within the panel's work programme. In particular, the panel noted there were issues pertaining maintaining older peoples independence in their own home (are properties fit for purpose), the availability of step down accommodation (down-sizing), as well as more formal provision of elderly residential care.
- 11.19 The panel also noted in respect of the latter from officers, that there was also a move to bring the community in to retirement homes. That is the community also uses communal spaces within the older peoples homes to help bring bridge inter-generational gaps and improve community cohesion.

Agreed: that the panel would assess older peoples housing provision and would scope this with officers

- 11.20 Members discussed empty properties and the councils approach to this. Whilst all were in agreement that this is an important issue which would be of

interest to assess within scrutiny, it was suggested that it may be a more appropriate if a briefing or short report is provided to the panel to explain what work is currently being undertaken in this area.

Agreed: that the Chair would discuss with officers how the issue of empty homes can be presented within the scrutiny work programme.

11.21 The panel discussed homelessness and the increasing costs of this to the Council. The panel noted from earlier budget discussions that the council was adopting an early intervention approach to prevent homelessness and further to proposals within the medium term financial strategy, would be making a number of whole systems interventions to help improve outcomes.

11.22 The panel noted that there were currently about 3,000 families in temporary accommodation and the council was planning to make a number of interventions to help reduce demand. The most pressing issue for the council, and indeed London wide, is the under supply of housing as many landlords with whom the council has contracts are now choosing to place their properties on the private market to obtain higher yields. There are as a consequence a number of political decisions that may need to be taken to help support the councils approach (e.g. increasing housing stock, external placement and priorities).

11.23 The panel noted that it would be useful to understand in greater detail local plans to reduce homelessness and would welcome an update on this once plans are available. It was suggested that in the interim, the panel proceed with the arranged visit to APEX House (as agreed in section 6.2) and discuss how best to proceed with the homelessness and temporary accommodation issue thereafter.

Agreed: any further work on temporary accommodation/ homelessness should be assessed once the visit to APEX House has been completed.

11.24 The panel noted that the new version of the Housing Strategy was just in consultation (from July to October) and that a number of housing related strategies will fall from this. It was suggested that the panel may wish to appraise this to identify any such items which it may wish to come to scrutiny in the year head as pre-decision scrutiny.

Agreed: the panel would assess the Haringey Housing Strategy to identify any sub-policies or strategies.

11.25 The panel discussed what constituted an affordable home and noted that the definition was set regionally by the Mayor. It was noted that this is one of the key areas in discussions around the HVA in that the degree of housing subsidy of new build and the quantum of 'affordable homes' ultimately built were related (e.g. closer to target rent the fewer built).

The meeting closed at 9.10pm