

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Havering Museum
5 July 2012 (7.30 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Damian White (Chairman), Linda Hawthorn (Vice-Chair), Wendy Brice-Thompson, Michael Deon Burton, Osman Dervish, Paul McGeary, Frederick Osborne (In place of Linda Trew) and Frederick Thompson (In place of Garry Pain)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Ray Morgon, Gary Pain (Frederick Thompson substituting) and Linda Trew (Fred Osborne substituting).

Councillor Lesley Kelly was also present.

Officers present:

Tony Huff, Acting Chief Executive Homes in Havering
Simon Parkinson, Head of Culture and Leisure Services
Sue Witherspoon, Head of Housing and Public Protection

Ian Wilks, Chair, Havering Museum (part of meeting).

2 DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Thompson declared an interest as he was a director of Havering Museum.

Councillor Brice-Thompson declared an interest as she was married to Councillor Thompson.

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed everyone present of the arrangements in case of fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the building.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 HOMES IN HAVERING

The Head of Housing and Public Protection thanked the Committee for the invitation and confirmed that, currently, the Council and Homes in Havering (HiH) remained separate organisations.

The ALMO had been set up originally as it was the option chosen, after consultation, to receive and administer the Decent Homes funding from the Government. The HiH Board was made up of four Councillors, four tenants and four independent directors. The Council was the sole shareholder in the HiH company.

The Comprehensive Spending Review following the 2010 election agreed to keep the Decent Homes Programme but required Councils to now find 10% of the funding direct. There was no longer a requirement to keep an ALMO in order to obtain the Decent Homes funding. Havering had been allocated a total of £62.7 million funding compared to an original bid of £112 million although this was still considered sufficient to deliver the Decent Homes programme.

The Council undertook a consultation with tenants between October 2011 and February 2012. The Council's offer to tenants and leaseholders indicated that Council control would allow costs savings of at least £300,000 per year by for example combining Council and HiH call centres. The Council had also undertaken to maintain the quality of service and to deliver the Decent Homes programme.

The results of the consultation had indicated that 31% of tenants had wanted to keep HiH and 48% wished to return to Council control while 19% had not indicated a preference. This had resulted in Cabinet deciding in March 2012 to bring HiH back into the Council with a target to achieve this by 1 October 2012. A project board for the reintegration had been established, chaired by Cynthia Griffin. The HiH Board had agreed they would sign the termination agreement at their next meeting in early September and the Acting Chief Executive added that the independent directors wished to make sure that the directors were discharging their responsibilities properly.

It was confirmed that TUPE regulations did apply to the transfer and an HR sub-group was considering this. All permanent HiH staff would transfer to the Council on the same terms and conditions. There would be around 150 permanent staff transferred with a further 20-30 staff on fixed term contracts which would be extended to the end of March 2013. The TUPE protection period would last two years but reorganisations could still be undertaken during this period.

There would not be many changes for tenants as a result of the transfer and there would be no change to the tenancies themselves. The HiH Board

would be abolished and a residents' forum set up with the proposal that this be chaired by the relevant Cabinet member.

The new organisation would be called Havering Homes and Housing Service although the only immediate changes as regards branding etc would apply to letterheads and signage at the Chippenham Road building. Staff would not be moved from Chippenham Road and rebranding costs would be kept to a minimum. The overall costs of the transfer would not be more than the savings from the transfer generated in year one i.e. £300,000. The Council's logo would be put on the HiH website with effect from 1 October 2012 but it was planned to have dual websites running for a period of three months.

Councillor Kelly explained that the rebranding was needed as it was important that the Council showed tenants that their requests for change had been listened to. The Council wished to avoid having a two-part service which would be confusing for tenants.

The termination agreement had been reached amicably with a unanimous vote of the Board in favour.

The repairs contract with Morrisons expired at the end of July 2013 and would shortly be retendered. It was clarified that Morrisons normally used a sub-contractor for void properties.

It was confirmed that a residents' forum was used in many other areas and the Council felt that it was important to account to tenants. The aim was for the forum to look at the overall standard of service and housing policies etc.

There were approximately 2,500 leaseholders in Havering with around 20% of properties sub-let to others. Leaseholders were also consulted and favoured coming back into the Council. Leaseholders would have two representatives on the residents' forum.

The Committee **NOTED** the update.

6 **JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES**

Jubilee Celebrations

The head of culture and leisure services reported that Jubilee events had been held in Havering over a four week period. This included the Big Dance Weekender event in Hornchurch which attracted both older people and children to try ballroom dancing and an open air cinema although the attendance at this was lowered due to the poor weather on the day.

A diamond jubilee market was held on Saturday 28 June and the Romfest event was held on the Sunday. This was however affected by the very poor weather on the day which limited attendance to 2-300. The carnival procession on the day went well. A fun run and sports festival was held in Raphael Park as well as the lighting of a beacon in Havering Atte Bower. The Langtons concert on Tuesday 4 June was attended by 2-3,000 people. Members complimented the head of service on the jubilee events which they felt had been very well organised.

There had been approximately 90 street parties across the borough which was more than many other boroughs. Two open spaces – Brittons Playing Fields and Park Lane Recreation Ground were to be designated as Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields. This would give the sites extra protection in the planning process and would mean it would be very difficult to develop housing on the sites in the future. Veolia had agreed in principle to fund £25,000 of improvements at each site and the Council was also bidding for national funding for this work.

There would also be a small land swap involving the Dukes Hall car park but the officer confirmed that the same amount of open space would be retained. Further details of the land swap would be supplied to the Committee. Reported problems in the park had now been reduced by the work of the Parks Protection Team.

Olympics Preparation

The head of service reported that a total of £16.5 million of Olympic contracts had been won by Havering businesses. Robust planning had been undertaken for major incidents during the Games period in order to ensure the safety of Havering residents. An emergency planning C3 document had been produced which covered the responsibilities of the Council and Police. 4-5 emergency planning exercises had taken place to allow for planning for different scenarios.

An emergency planning operation centre had been set up in Mercury House which would be in place before the torch relay reached Havering. This would be staffed from 7 am to 7 pm but there would also be on-call arrangements overnight.

It was explained that Havering was in the Park Zone led by Newham and there would be the expectation of cross-borough support in case of Olympic incidents. The Police borough commander was a member of the Havering Olympic Board. Havering Police would provide a normal service during the Olympic period but may have to cover any Olympic-related incidents elsewhere. More use would be made of PCSOs should this occur.

As regards day to day impact, there were no Olympic training venues in the borough although the A13 through Havering was part of the Olympic Route Network with the A12 as a back up route. It was possible that one lane of the route may be set aside for travel to Hadleigh Farm in Essex, the venue

for the Olympic mountain bike event. The Olympic cycle training route ran through Havering for a distance of 400 yards only.

While it was uncertain how many people would stay in Havering, fewer tourists were now expected overall. The proposed campsite in the borough had been cancelled as it had received significantly fewer bookings than expected. There were some concerns about visitors to the Games parking at stations in Havering. Streetcare would open car parks for longer hours and were also looking at using local schools to provide additional parking facilities. There would also be more parking controls in place, especially around transport hubs.

Local businesses had received a lot of advice from Transport for London regarding arrangements during the Olympic period and a number of workshops had been held. Only a few Council services would be affected by the Olympics with possible issues for services such as street care and safeguarding. It was expected that there may be issues with staff who needed to travel through the Stratford area but flexible working and arrangements for working from home were in place for staff.

An augmented safety advisory group had been formed comprising the Council, Police, Health Trusts etc. which dealt with groups wanting to hold large events in Havering. This had improved planning and prevented some events that had not been thought through such as the proposed campsite at Gidea Park rugby club.

The Olympic torch relay would visit Havering on 22 July and it was felt that, if the weather was good, there could be in excess of 100,000 people viewing the torch as it passed through the borough. The route would enter Havering via London Road and visit Romford Market Place, South Street, Hornchurch, the Rainham area and Rainham Hall. Two major celebrations were planned – at Romford Market Place and by the Queen's Theatre with a large event also planned in Rainham. A total of 43 torch bearers would carry the torch through Rainham although not all of these would have a connection to Havering, for example the famous pianist Liang Liang would carry the torch for one leg.

Significant investment had been made in crowd control measures for the torch relay. A total of 83 volunteers had been recruited to help on the torch relay and it was hoped to raise this to 100. Stewards were also being employed. The head of service confirmed that a lot of investment in both time and money had been required to ensure successful management of the event. Some costs would be paid by the Olympic Organising Committee (LOCOG). There would be a large entourage travelling along with the Olympic torch.

The relay was expected to have an impact on areas such as trading standards who aimed to prevent sale of illegal goods, environmental health and street care who would be repairing any potholes along the route. The

Council was trying to purchase two torches for display in Havering Museum and the local studies centre.

The Council was also working closely on Olympic preparations with the health agencies. As regards community safety, 6,000 troops would be camping in Hainault during the Games and it was possible that army personnel could come into the nightlife area of Romford. Community safety and the Police were aware of this.

A number of partner organisations were involved in the risk assessment process for events. The Council was available to provide advice and support. Checks were not run on people joining LOCOG's Olympic Leaders scheme but there was no evidence of any problems with this scheme in Havering.

Maximum numbers had been set at the three main torch relay events and Council staff would try to prevent more people from entering if these numbers were reached. The head of service reiterated that a lot of planning had been undertaken for the torch relay events.

3-400 unaccredited Chinese media would be based in Havering during the Olympics and had hired the former Albermarle Youth House as a media centre. The journalists would be encouraged to spend in the local economy and it was therefore hoped to bring an overall benefit to the borough.

Members expressed a wish to meet with the Chinese media, perhaps in conjunction with the Mayor and the officer agreed to check if this would be possible.

The visitor kiosk in South Street had been well used and the staff working in the unit had been very positive. The head of service agreed to obtain figures for the numbers of people using the kiosk.

The Committee **NOTED** the update,

7 **COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13**

The Committee considered an initial suggested work programme that had been compiled by the Chairman with the assistance of the Committee Officer. It was suggested that perhaps a topic group could be run looking at promotion of Romford shopping facilities and the impact on Romford of the Westfield mall in Stratford. Perhaps the Council's head of communications could attend and brief the Committee on the 'Love Romford' campaign.

It was possible that the Committee could scrutinise issues arising out of the Ageing Well event held earlier in the year and space could be left in the programme for this.

It was also suggested that the Committee could scrutinise the approval of housing developments in the borough and their impact on infrastructure etc. Regeneration areas in Havering could also be considered such as the Briar Road Estate and it was felt useful to also programme in items on the Olympic Legacy and a review of how the Games had impacted on Havering.

Subject to the above comments, the Committee **AGREED** the work programme as presented.

8 **HAVERING MUSEUM**

The Committee was briefed by the Chair of Havering Museum who advised that the museum had now been open for two years and was breaking even. The campaign to build the museum had in fact started in August 1999. He explained that few people felt they lived in Havering as a place, preferring to say they lived in e.g. Collier Row. As such, the museum had been designed with a separate pod for each of the five towns – Hornchurch, Upminster, Rainham, Romford and Havering Village.

Members then toured the museum noting that it included a children's learning zone, reception area and a shop selling the largest selection of local history books in Romford. Displays included audio recollections of local residents as well as interactive screens in each pod.

9 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

Chairman