

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB- COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
14 January 2015 (7.30 - 9.25 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Lawrence Webb (Chairman), Linda Hawthorn (Vice-Chair), Steven Kelly, Frederick Thompson, Jason Frost, Jody Ganly and Barbara Matthews

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robby Misir

Through the Chairman, announcements were made regarding emergency evacuation arrangements and the decision making process followed by the Committee.

19 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 PRESENTATION ON LONDON ENTERPRISE PANEL

At the request of the Chairman, the Head of Economic Development, Culture & Community gave a presentation on the London Enterprise Panel (LEP).

Members were informed that as part of the LEP Growth Deal, an initiative "London New Homes Bonus" (NHB) was top sliced to the LEP to fund the Growth Deal. This amounted to 80% (£56m) to provide the a programme of activity to support economic growth priorities.

The GLA/London Councils invited bids from boroughs along LEP themes to be submitted by August 2014 for £1.6m. A final settlement was to be agreed in January 2015 worth about £1.369 million.

The presentation detailed the following programmes that the service identified would provide maximum growth as part of the Growth Deal Project:

- Romford Town Centre
- Supporting retail businesses
- Havering business incubator hub
- Care Havering
- Build Havering

- Renewable energy investment

The subcommittee was informed that the Romford Town Centre Project had six project areas that included making improvements to Romford Market. Officers had identified that the market needed to attract new traders and footfall.

Another part of the Town Centre Management initiative was to recruit a Town Centre Manager to lead on the various programmes and projects. This included reviewing how Romford was marketed and its branding. It was also stated that was a need to develop a business plan with the Town Centre partnership in mind.

Members gathered that part of the Romford Town Centre project was to deliver projects to diversify the Town Centre's High Streets. Officers were also considering an engagement programme with High Street landlords which would develop an incentive programme in making the Town Centre more attractive for retailers.

Officers explained that the LEP funding would also enable the service to acquire an interest in empty/low value units on South Street.

The presentation outlined that Havering's retail sector held the second largest number of SME's in the borough and the largest number of employees. However, numbers of jobs and SME's were in decline [Size of firms in London: ONS, 2012].

The service recognised that the High Streets and Town Centres provided employment, activity and local distinctiveness as well as potential for business growth. Within Havering, vacancy rates were low in most centres but Collier Row and Rainham were above average.

In Supporting the High Streets Projects, the following programmes had been identified:

- To developing a town team in Hornchurch
- To provide borough-wide retail-focussed business support

Members were informed that part of the Havering Business Incubator hub project was to set up an incubator hub for around 20 start-up businesses in Romford. The business incubator would deliver a programme of events and workshops and provide a business advice service for new and existing Havering businesses

Under the Care Havering Initiative, the Committee was informed that the Care Act would lead to a fundamental change in the way social care was delivered with the focus on prevention rather than response.

Havering had the highest proportion of adult social care users aged 65+ compared to other London Boroughs. The Care Havering Projects was looking:

- To provide a sector-specific business network and training
- intensive 'fast track' support for 12 SME's in the health and social care sector
- And to develop a "Buy with Confidence" Scheme to attain standards

As part of the Build Havering, officer informed the Committee that construction represented Havering's largest sector making up 20% of its businesses compared to its neighbouring boroughs of Barking & Dagenham (13%) and Redbridge (11%).

The service detailed that construction skills had been identified as an issues by both pan London and in the labour market review. There were potential for linkages to Havering Colleges 'Advanced Technical Centre' proposals.

As part of the Build Havering Projects, the following programmes were planned:

- To provide a sector-specific business network and training
- Intensive 'fast track' support for 12 SME's in the construction sector
- To provide work opportunities for the locally unemployed, apprenticeships or work experience in the construction sector.
- To overcome the barriers that skilled-builders have to secure employment e.g. training, obtaining qualifications and cards

The subcommittee was informed that Havering had the highest renewable energy potential of the London boroughs, largely due to the high potential for wind energy. It was also stated that Havering had the seventh highest potential for solar pv electricity generation of the London boroughs.

Havering residents had accepted and adopted renewable energy and was the fifth highest number of solar photovoltaic installations of all London boroughs, with 744 solar installations (200 more than the sixth highest borough)

As part of the Renewable Energy Investment Projects, the service planned:

- For the council to implement a renewable energy scheme
- To provide business advice on renewable energy to businesses particularly in the Riverside BID
- And to support low carbon businesses (start-ups and existing) in Havering

The Next Step

The subcommittee was informed that the service was looking to agree final allocations for each project area (to new total of £1.369m). Following this the next action plan was to develop delivery plans for each of the six project areas for a prompt start on 1 April 2015.

The following preparatory works were outlined to Members:

- Romford Market Review (May 2015).
- Business and landlord engagement in Romford (Jan 2015)
- Recruitment of a Romford Growth Manager (April 2015)
- Market shaping and business development research into the local care and support market (March 2015)
- Number of renewable energy feasibility studies (March 2015)

The Committee **noted** the presentation.

21 **CABINET REPORT REVIEW - CULTURE STRATEGY**

In accordance with the Council's Continuous Improvement Model, the subcommittee received a presentation update on the Culture Strategy from the Policy, Marketing and Administration Manager.

The presentation outlined the following:

- The Culture Strategy 2012-2014
- Progress against the Action Plan
- The Culture Strategy 2015-2017

The subcommittee was informed that the Culture Strategy was driven by a very simple ambition: "To transform lives through participation in, and enjoyment of, culture"

The Strategy was based on the following objectives:

- Objective 1: Health and Wellbeing - Support a high standard of mental, physical and emotional health for all by increasing the number of people taking part in sport and Physical Activity and accessing the natural environment
- Objective 2: Learning and Development - Support learning opportunities for all, by enabling people to take part in new activities, ensuring development pathways are in place and providing access to coaching, officiating, leadership and club development training
- Objective 3: Towns and Communities - Enriching our towns and communities, through investment and engagement in culture, and delivering a high quality, safe, pleasant, visually interesting landscape and townscape for our residents.

The subcommittee was taken through some slides that outlined progress against the Action Plan from each of the objectives.

In summary:

- 31 actions had been achieved (65%)
- 13 actions partially achieved (27%)
- 4 actions not achieved (8%), but 1 of these was because the action was no longer required.

The subcommittee was informed that the Culture Strategy for 2015-2017 was scheduled for drafting by February 2015 and would be circulated by March 2015. It was envisaged to be approved by May/June 2015.

The Committee **noted** the presentation.

Chairman