

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

Present:

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Robby Misir.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 14 January 2015 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

23 REPORT OF THE LANDLORD ACCREDITATION TOPIC GROUP

The report of Landlord Accreditation Topic Group was presented by the Housing Strategy Manager.

The report detailed that at the initial meeting on 1 July 2014, the Towns & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee agreed to set up a Landlord Accreditation Scheme Topic Group to consider the options of introducing methods to monitor and control the activity of private rented sector landlords in the borough.

The Topic Group aimed to understand licensing schemes, understanding current practice in other boroughs and a scheme that would appropriate for Havering.

The Topic Group noted the current status of Private Sector Housing (PSH) in Havering and examples of London Landlord Accreditation Scheme's (LLAS to then enable discussion regarding the merit of developing such a programme within Havering.

The Topic Group was aware there are three main potential options for the Council if it would like to proceed with tighter regulation of Landlord activity in the private rented sector in some or all areas in Havering.

Following a brief discussion, the sub-committee supported the principles of the scrutiny but decided to refer the report back to the Topic Group for additional information and evidence to back its recommendations:

- details of costs of implementing and funding,
- enforcement scheme
- housing standards that apply to HMOs
- case studies” relating to the schemes in operation in Barking & Dagenham and Redbridge

The sub-committee was informed that a data collection exercise was currently on the way and that the evidence collated from the exercise would inform on the decisions the service would look to consider.

24 **CABINET REPORT UPDATE - HAVERING BUSINESS GROWTH PROGRAMME**

In accordance with the Council’s Continuous Improvement Model, the sub-committee received a presentation update on the Havering Business Growth Programme that was considered by Cabinet in April 2013 from the Head of Economic Development, Culture & Community and the Business Development Manager.

The sub-committee was informed that Cabinet had agreed the three years Business Growth Programme in April 2013 to deliver the following benefits:

- Improvement in the reputation of Havering as a place to do business
- Greater prosperity
- Higher employment levels
- Improved quality of life

The proposals to deliver these four objectives were set out under three themes:

- Promoting investment in Havering
- Encouraging existing businesses to grow
- Transforming customer services for the business community

The following key achievements were detailed to the sub-committee:

The service had been able to work closely with partners to promote the borough and focus on key sites and opportunities for growth. The development of a new inward Investment Website and a commercial property database that was launched in 2014 to grow awareness.

The service was currently promoting jointly available sites in London Riverside with GLA, over 124 Business enquiries had been dealt with in the last two years.

The LEP Funding and business case were being prepared for diversifying the offer on South Street and Business incubator in Romford to bring empty floor space back into use.

The service had also completed work on the London Riverside BID Development Opportunity Study.

It was also noted that work on Salamon's Way (London Riverside) had been initiated

A two year business start-up programme delivered by Kingston Smith had provided opportunities for 186 individuals to be engaged in thirty-five propositions going forward to next stage of the business development process.

The sub-committee was informed that future plans and opportunities within the theme included for the Romford Development Framework to be taken forward as part of the Local Plan and promoted to private sector investors. The developing of an action plan for the Office Quarter including encouraging the availability of more serviced office accommodation.

The service was seeking to identify, lease or acquire low value and empty units in South Street using GLA LEP funding and High Streets funding.

The presentation informed the sub-committee that the second theme was seeking to encourage existing businesses to grow by the following:

- Promoting Local Procurement
- Improving Borough Infrastructure
- Improved management of Business Rate Collection
- Enhanced Business Support Services Programme
- Realising the potential of the planning system for business growth
- Promoting Town centres
- A skilled workforce
- Business Improvement Districts
- Helping businesses to be compliant and self-regulatory with targeted enforcement

The sub-committee was informed that future plans and opportunities within theme included:

- Using LEP funding to develop a new Business Support programme
- To bring forward Local Plan and CIL in line with Local Development statement

- To develop further Section 106 policies to ensure local employment and skills opportunity as part of the 'Build Havering' construction industry project
- To develop a three year business plan for Romford to utilise LEP funding including
- new strategy for Romford Market, deliver
- an enhanced programme of events in Romford,
- review the Romford Town Centre Partnership
- Refresh of marketing and branding
- Enable and facilitate businesses to develop sustainable partnerships such as Town Teams in the borough
- Develop a Skills & Employment Strategy and strengthen cross- borough partnerships to develop joint projects
- Deliver the a skills and employment Action Plan for Harold Hill

The presentation informed the sub-committee that the third theme related to transforming customer services for the business community by adopting a corporate approach to business development. Other included:

- Customer services transformation
- Selling Services to the Business Community

The sub-committee noted that future plans and opportunities within this theme included:

- Further development of the Business Voice Board
- Review of CMT Key Accounts and introducing key account process for top 100 businesses
- Improved functionality of the business portal e.g. by bringing payments of business rates via the portal
- Developing a database to deliver more targeted business support advice and guidance
- Further development of drawing together the Councils sponsorship and advertising opportunities
- Better use of the Havering Business Awards to communicate Council's approach to business growth
- Development of a stakeholder management plan

The Sub-Committee noted the update.

25 **CABINET REPORT UPDATE - HAVERING NATURE CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

In accordance with the Council's Continuous Improvement Model, the sub-committee received a presentation update on the Nature Conservation and Bioersivity Strategy from the Head of Culture and Leisure Service.

The Sub-Committee was informed that Cabinet had agreed a three year Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Strategy in January 2014.

The Sub-Committee noted the progress against the objectives and targets that had been included in the Action Plan, which formed part of the agreed Strategy.

The Sub-Committee was advised that the following positive progress had been made in relation to:

1. Increasing the amount of natural space in the borough
2. The management of wetlands
3. The management of woodlands
4. The management of grasslands, meadows and pastures
5. The restoration of landscapes
6. The management of gardens
7. The protection of significant species
8. Volunteering
9. Publicity and Promotion
10. Tourism

The Sub-Committee was advised that whilst some progress had been made, there were more work to be done in relation to:

1. Wildlife corridors and ecological networks;
2. Eutrophication
3. Education
4. Natural products / sustainable management
5. Planning

The Sub-Committee was informed that work was yet to begin in relation to the objective on "Major roads as barriers to movement".

The Sub-Committee noted the update.

26 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee without discussion agreed to note the 2014/2015 Annual Report and refer the report to Overview & Scrutiny Board.

27 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2 & 3 2014/15

The Sub-Committee without any discussion agreed to note the Performance Indicators report that set out the Council's performance against the Living Ambition Goal for Quarter Two and Three 2014/15.

Chairman