

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB- COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
19 January 2017 (7.30 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Lawrence Webb (Chairman), Steven Kelly, Frederick Thompson, Jody Ganly, Michael Deon Burton, Carol Smith, +Alex Donald and +June Alexander

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Linda Hawthorn, (substitute Alex Donald) and Julie Wilkes (substitute June Alexander)

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 26 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 ROMFORD MARKET UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received an update presentation from the Projects and Programmes Manager on behalf of Economic Development regarding the market transformation programme.

Members noted that a wide variety of events were held in the run up to Christmas 2016 including a Colouring Clinic - colouring and drawing on large pictures of Romford, Face Painting from the Feel Good Painted Company, Popcorn and Candyfloss stall. Cakes and Biscuits on sale from The Goodness Food Company and games like giant Kerplunk and Lantern Making- Seasonal Stalls, Princess Elsa and Princess Anna sing-a-long character in the Market Place.

The Retailery, a creative playground for makers, thinkers and doers was launched by the Mayor in November 2016. The Retailery provided a dedicated space for inexpensive retail, catering and office units to start-ups.

The Ice Rink was launched by the Mayor and Birmingham Eagles Acrobatic skating troupe. The Ice Rink had been very successful with over 12,300 people using the rink.

The Sub-Committee noted that a full evaluation of the events were yet to be completed.

A new market manager had been appointed and was now in post.

The Projects and Programmes Manager outlined that the following work streams were underway:

- Branding and marketing was been reviewed and a new programme of events and publicity to be devised.
- Review of market processes and procedures underway.
- Increased communication with traders- first new Traders Committee meeting held recently.
- Reviewing Social Media usage to improve profile with positive images and comments.
- Recruiting new traders - Identified and contacted several new traders to improve numbers. Held discussions on site with over twenty potential new traders.
- Establishing target products for longer term incentive scheme to increase trader numbers.

The Sub-Committee was informed that a planning application had been submitted for the proposed market house which would provide seven days food and beverage in a permanent catering unit. It was envisaged that this part of the programme would bring an increase in dwell time within the Market Place and Town Centre which would make the market the heart of the town including the new public square.

The Sub-Committee **noted** Romford Market transformation update.

22 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE UPDATE - QUARTER THREE**

The Sub-Committee was provided with the latest Corporate Performance data for the 14 indicators which fall under the remit of the Sub-Committee. These related to the Clean and Proud goals.

Eleven of the indicators (78.6%) had a RAG status of Green while three indicators (21.4%) had a RAG status of Red.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the red indicators related to the Percentage of major applications processed within 13 weeks. Members noted that Major applications often required a legal agreement which could take the application beyond the target 13 week period. Various activities were taking place to process planning applications in the required times. These include:

- increased promotion of Planning Performance Agreements for significant major applications
- promotion of the pre-application advice offer
- quick turn-round of the validation process when application is received

- neighbour notification
- officer visit/report and the committee date better timed to allow optimum ability to keep applications in time without requiring Extension of Time agreements.

Performance figures presented for planning applications processed in the required timescales do not include extension of time (EoT) agreements. Taking extension of time agreements into account, performance is significantly better. However, the service is looking at ways to reduce reliance on EoT agreements.

The percentage of repairs completed on time (including services contractors) is below target. The fundamental barrier to complying with the repairs completed on time target is the volume of overdue orders that are completed every month. The main repairs contractor has produced a recovery plan to deal with the level of out of target orders and a sustainable action plan to prevent continuing poor performance. The timescales for tangible improvement and the achievement of 95%+ repairs completed on time will be the end of quarter 4.

The number of potential start-up businesses accessing advice via the Business Start-up Programme is below target (63 against a target of 75). Performance levels are recovering from the gap in service provision at the beginning of the year whilst a new contractor was procured. Enterprise Nation started in May and are confident that performance will continue to improve throughout the year and meet the year end target. The contractor will deliver workshops, coaching, one-to-one health checks, online webinars, masterclasses and podcasts to local businesses. Performance is believed to be higher than indicated but the full data is not currently available.

The Sub-Committee sought clarification on role of the Council in supporting the Clean up exercise at Tesco, as it was considered such a large company should be able to fund such a programme. In response, the Sub-Committee was informed that the Community Clean up at Tesco Roneo Corner was organised through the employer supported volunteer scheme and the programme enabled the Council to leverage companies corporate social responsibility to meet local needs. The Sub-Committee was informed that the clean-up took place not only in Tesco car park but also in the surrounding public areas and streets. The clean-up team was made up of Tesco staff, Community Clean-Up ambassadors and local residents and equipment was provided both by the Council and by Tesco.

In response to a Member enquiry on how staff at the Libraries assisted those who could not speak any or little English. Officers responded that Library staff were able to search for classes and courses for English as a second language as well as informing customers that Transparent Languages offers similar courses; (Transparent Languages was an online resource available free to library members on the library website). There were a selection of dual language picture books and a collection of

Community Language books available for parents and carers in the Central Library in Romford.

The Sub-Committee was also informed that the person that was rejected from the volunteer scheme was found not to be suitable for the role applied for at Collier Row Library.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

23 **REVIEW OF CABINET REPORT - HAVERING LOCAL PLAN**

In accordance with the Council's Continuous Improvement Model, the Sub-Committee received an update on the progress of the Local Plan to date included details of the initial Local Plan consultation that took place earlier in 2015 and the preparation of evidenced base to support the Plan.

The report informed that the Local Plan report sought Cabinet approval to publish an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) which was a statutory document setting out the plans and policy documents that would be prepared and a timetable for their delivery.

The Sub-Committee noted that since December 2015 the following progress had been made on the Local Plan:

1. Evidence Base

The Local Plan was required to be supported and justified by a credible and robust evidence base. The key pieces of evidence that had progressed since December 2015 were:

- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) 2016** – The Havering's SFRA Level 1 was published in 2014 and it provided a robust depiction of flood risk across the borough. Since the report was finalised the Environment Agency had published revised climate change projections which are required to be taken into account. An update of the 2014 SFRA had therefore been produced.
- **Open Space, Allotments and Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment** - provided a comprehensive assessment of the borough's existing supply of and future need for open spaces, allotments and sports facilities (both indoor and outdoor).
- **Infrastructure Delivery Plan** –identified the infrastructure needed to support the population and housing growth over the plan period. The study covered transport, water supply, wastewater and its treatment, energy, telecommunications, utilities, waste, health, social care, education and burial space.

- **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment** – provided a robust assessment of current and future need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpersons accommodation within the Borough.
- **Town Centre Audits** The surveys provided an up to date understanding of the uses and vacancies within each town centre. The Audit would inform on decisions on any updates to the town centre designations within the Local Plan.
- **Wind Energy Assessment** sought to identify areas within the borough that were potentially suitable for the development of wind turbines in response to the Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS42) in June 2015 and the subsequent amendments to the Planning Practice Guidance which stated that Local Planning Authorities should only grant planning permission for wind turbines if the development site was in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local Plan.
- **Residential Car Parking Standards Study** would set out the evidence to inform local car parking standards within the Plan.
- **Transport Background Paper** brought together a number of transport evidence base documents to support the Plan.
- **Outer North East London Strategic Housing Market Assessment** This study has been undertaken with the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge. It outlined the objectively assessed need for private and affordable housing within the housing market area for the outer north east London area. Prior to the publication of the study updated population and household projections were published by the GLA. Work was underway to ensure that these projections are reflected in the SHMA.
- **Local Plan Viability Assessment** –sought to determine the likely impact that the policies and standards in the Local Plan would have on the viability of developments within the borough. The purpose of the viability assessment was to show (in general terms) that the cumulative impact when considering the Plan as a whole does not put the implementation of the Plan at risk.
- **Sustainability Appraisal** – sought to ensure that the promotion of sustainable development was integrated in the plan making process. It was a key tool used to appraise the environmental, economic and social effects of plans, strategies and policies.

- **Green Belt Study** – assessed Havering's Green Belt against the purposes of green belt as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework. A Green Belt Topic Group had been set up by the Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to scrutinise and better understand the process involved in green belt land designation within the local plan system. Several meetings and a tour of green belt sites had taken place. A further meeting was scheduled for late January 2017.

Officers stated that the Havering Local Plan was being prepared in accordance with the 'Duty to Co-operate', that placed a legal duty on local authorities and other public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation on strategic cross-boundary matters.

The Sub-Committee noted that since December 2015 officers had carried out a programme of engagement with neighbouring boroughs, other public bodies including the GLA & Environment Agency and had individual meetings as well as a formal duty to co-operate workshop with neighbouring boroughs in November 2016.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Local Plan Direction of Travel Document was published in November 2016 as a way of engaging with and keeping stakeholders up to date and providing further detail on the emerging strategy and policy approach that will be reflected in the Pre-Submission Local Plan.

The preparation of the Direction of Travel was not a statutory requirement but was prepared to inform stakeholders and assist in the process of preparing a new Plan. Responses received to the Direction of Travel Document would be collated and reported to Cabinet alongside the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan in due course.

The Development Planning Team Leader informed the Sub-Committee that a draft Pre-Submission Local Plan would be discussed at a series of briefings with Cabinet Members throughout January 2017 followed by engagement with non-administration Members.

The indicative timetable for the progression of the Local Plan was outlined as follows:

- Consultation (under Regulation 19) on the Pre-Submission version to commence in early 2017
- Submission - Spring 2017
- Examination - Summer/Autumn 2017 (subject to the availability of the Planning Inspectorate)
- Adoption - Winter 2017/18

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

24 REVIEW OF CABINET REPORT - SOCIAL HOMEBUY

In accordance with the Council's Continuous Improvement Model, the Sub-Committee received a briefing on the Social Home Buy scheme that was considered by Cabinet in 2015.

Officers informed Members that the scheme was put in place in and published via at the Heart (a periodical for Council tenants and Leaseholders) in November 2015 and to date only one application had been submitted for the scheme which did not progress to completion due to financial issues of the applicant.

The Sub-Committee noted that in regards to any cost implications, from the Council's view point any property where the option of a share being purchased the social rent would be lost. However rental income was still receivable from the property, based on the remaining share owned by the Council. In addition routine repairs liabilities would discontinue which could be recorded as a saving to the Council.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the service propose to carry out some additional publicity targeted at Council tenants to further promote the scheme.

In response to an enquiry on feedback, the Sub-Committee noted that as there had only been one application there was no basis for a feedback. In response to uptake on the right to buy scheme, the Sub-Committee noted that there were about 110 applications been considered.

It was also clarified that the council retained a first option to buy back a property and that the maximum discount on a right to buy scheme was £140 thousand depending on length of tenancy.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the update.

25 REVIEW OF CABINET REPORT - ATTESTATION OF PARKS PROTECTION OFFICERS

The Sub-Committee received a written report that updated on the progress in implementing the proposals of introducing Parks Protection Officers as agreed by Cabinet in December 2015.

The report outlined that since February 2016, Parks Protection Officers have been attested as constables to enable them to detain suspected offenders in the Council's Parks and Open Spaces. The new powers have been used on average about twice a month. The power had assisted in dealing with those isolated cases where the alleged offenders have not been willing to cooperate and there had been no incidents in the use of the power.

The Sub-Committee noted that there were currently five permanent members of staff consisting of a Parks Protection Manager and 4 Parks Enforcement Officers whose responsibility to specifically in Havering parks and open spaces. The team operated seven days a week, covering key times throughout the day and evening from a base in Raphael Park.

The report informed Members that attestation provided powers of a constable to Parks Protection Officers have been in operation for ten months with them formally being used 21 times, an average of just over 2 detentions a month. It was still early to draw any firm conclusions at this stage other than the power had been of assistance in isolated cases which was the reason for introducing the power as identified in the Cabinet report.

The arrest powers have been successfully used and been an additional tool for the Parks Protection Service in patrolling the Council's parks and open spaces and responding to calls.

The status of constable had also assisted in providing a level of protection such that no officer had since been subject to assault or threat of assault during the monitoring period.

The Standard operating procedure had been reviewed with a slight change to clarify that Parks Protection Officers could act around the perimeter of parks/open spaces to prevent unlawful trespass and by exception can stop at incidents encountered when travelling in the Borough (for example stopping to assist the community where need for assistance is identified), although attestation powers cannot be used in either case.

The report stated that since June 2016, as part of the Clean and Safe review of senior management, Parks Protection had been part of the Regulatory Services service as part of the enforcement review within Regulatory Services would include the future role of Parks Protection in part of any Council enforcement function.

In the meantime, it is considered that the attestation process, providing a change to greater constable powers, has been successfully implemented without any incidents.

Other than an initial cost for additional equipment and court fees, the introduction of the attestation power for Parks Protection Officers has not resulted in any additional financial costs.

In officers' view, the attestation of officers to constable status in Parks had proved to be useful in addressing criminal behaviour in the parks/open spaces and a valuable additional tool in regard to ensuring effective enforcement.

The Sub-Committee noted that given that it was still early into the period since the power had been granted, the risks identified in the Cabinet report still existed and as such further periodic reviews of the power was

recommended as well as internal review at least annually of the Standard Operating Procedures.

The Sub-Committee noted the recommended to Members that this report be noted and the attestation powers be reviewed further in 12 months' time by December 2017.

Members noted that the report recommended that constable status continue, and remain under review for a further 12 months.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the update.

Chairman