

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Committee Room 3B - Town Hall
5 February 2018 (7.00 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Steven Kelly, Robby Misir, Dilip Patel, Viddy Persaud (Vice-Chair), Linda Trew, +Roger Westwood and Michael White
Residents' Group	Barbara Matthews, Barry Mugglestone and +Stephanie Nunn
East Havering Residents' Group'	+Alex Donald and Gillian Ford (Chairman)
UKIP Group	Ian de Wulverton and Lawrence Webb
Independent Residents' Group	Graham Williamson
Labour Group	Keith Darvill

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors John Crowder, Ray Morgon and Darren Wise.

+Substitute members: Councillor Roger Westwood (for John Crowder), Councillor Stephanie Nunn (for Ray Morgon) and Councillor Alex Donald (for Darren Wise).

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

40 CALL-IN OF A CABINET DECISION RELATING TO THE APPROVAL OF THE REGENERATION LOCAL LETTINGS PLAN & DECANT POLICY AND POSSESSION PROCEDURE

The report before Members detailed the call-in of a Cabinet decision relating to the approval of the Regeneration Local Lettings Plan and Decant Policy and Possession Procedure.

A requisition signed by Councillors Ray Morgon and Keith Darvill had called-in the Cabinet decision taken on 17 January 2018.

The reasons for the requisition were as follows.

- 1) The aim of the Council should be to mitigate the impact on all residents who will be forced to move from their existing property to enable the essential regeneration to take place;
- 2) Council tenants who held secure tenancies would be amongst those most severely impacted during the regeneration period;
- 3) The Cabinet should reconsider the plan as drafted and in particular revise part(para) 4.25 (as amended) of the plan because if implemented as proposed it would impact adversely on some secure tenants who were currently under occupiers and would penalise them at a time when they had endured a forced move.

During the debate Members asked for and received several points of clarification which were provided by the Council's Programme Director of Regeneration.

A brief summation of the call-in reasons was given.

It was agreed by all parties that there existed an increased housing need in the borough but it was essential that existing secure tenants were assisted and that the Council also needed residents assistance when downsizing.

In response to a question as to whether there was an appeals process to the re-housing officers confirmed that there was no appeals process but there was a very rigorous re-housing discussion that was had with all affected residents. The discussion identified what the housing need was required and allowed residents to provide any additional information that helped to identify the property that was offered to them. At present the Council was achieving an 80% first time success rate in offering suitable accommodation.

Members noted there was a huge need across the borough for two-bedroom properties.

Members were advised that the Council agreed that the mitigation of the impact on residents who would be forced to move from their existing property was needed and the Council was working closely with those affected as the situation was not ideal but there was a strategic need for the authority to do the regeneration and this was one of the only ways the amount of affordable housing could be increased.

In the first four estates that had been identified for regeneration 319 residents had been affected. 148 had already been moved to alternative suitable accommodation and there another 20 residents who had agreed to move which equated to 53%. It was felt that if the Council hadn't have been so supportive then that figure would not have been met.

Properties were not let on a like for like basis but on an individuals housing need and in order to do this the allocations policy was used.

All tenants and leaseholder had been offered a right to return to their existing properties once the regeneration works had been completed and so far only 10-15 residents had expressed an interest in exercised that right.

The Council was planning on building more two-bedroomed and three-bedroomed properties as the data showed these were in greater need than other sizes.

There was a great need for people wanting two-bedroomed accommodation that were in temporary accommodation and this year alone this placed a pressure on the General Fund of £1.5million.

There was currently 22% of residents living in general needs housing that were under-occupying and where there was a problem with housing supply then the problem needed to be addressed. This was why the downsizing criteria was in the allocations policy.

There were 56 people who would downsize from a two-bedroom property to a one-bedroom property. 11 families had already been moved using the existing policies.

There were currently 3 or 4 families that were not prepared to move using the existing policies which had been consulted on for a twelve week period previously.

Following discussions with Legal it had been agreed that it would be unfair to change the policy for one person when there had been so many people who had been through the process and had worked with the Council and secured a move to another property. There was some discretion within the policy that allowed an individual to approach the Council and explain the need for an additional room.

In summation Members were advised that a lot of time had been spent on building the policy which had included a lot of consultation with residents. There were other solutions which enabled the Council to assist residents on the points that had been raised in 1 and 2 of the call-in.

The Council was no longer in the position to be able to have under-occupation by choice. There were too many people in temporary accommodation that needed two-bedroomed properties.

In the future all tenants would have their housing needs assessed every three years and properties offered would match their needs.

Members noted that there was a £2,000 incentive for people who were downsizing and this would be retrospectively offered to residents who had already moved or had agreed to be moved. The incentive did not apply to people in temporary accommodation.

Members also noted that the policy was a local strategy and not Government led. Throughout the programme officers had reviewed Estate Regeneration Good Practice guidance and it was felt that the Council had met all the requirements of good practice.

It was commented by one Member that he had been approached by two residents who wanted to downsize who had contacted the Council but had not received offers of smaller properties and it was suggested that perhaps the Council needed to be more proactive in assisting residents. In response officers advised that there had previously been downsizing days help and information put in "*At The Heart*". Officers undertook to arrange to meet with the residents to discuss their needs.

The vote for the decision as to whether to uphold or dismiss the call-in was carried by 9 votes to 7.

Councillors Kelly, Mugglestone, Donald, De Wulverton, Webb, Williamson and Darvill voted to uphold the call-in.

Councillors Westwood, Misir, Patel, Persaud, Trew, White, Matthews, Nunn and Ford voted to dismiss the call-in.

Councillors voted to dismiss the call-in.

It was **RESOLVED** that the call-in of the Cabinet decision dated 17 January 2018 be dismissed.

Chairman