

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
10 October 2013 (7.30 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Linda Hawthorn (Chairman), Wendy Brice-Thompson, June Alexander, Osman Dervish, Barry Oddy and Garry Pain

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Linda Trew, Paul McGeary and Michael Deon Burton

Councillor Frederick Thompson was present for the final part of the meeting

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

38 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4 July and special meeting of 3 September 2013, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39 ANNUAL CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2012/3

The Committee without discussion agreed to note the Annual Corporate Performance Indicators for 2012/13.

40 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013/14 - QUARTER ONE

The Committee considered a report that set out the Council's performance against the Living Ambition Goal for the quarter one (April – June 2013).

In attendance at the meeting was the Head of Regulatory Services to brief Members on the performance indicators that related to Planning Services applications that did not meet its target.

The Head of Service provided the committee with an insight to the various issues that led to this slippage.

The Committee was informed that legislative changes as well as case officer turnover and higher than normal case officer sickness absence during this period had affected continuity of application handling and decision-making speed this quarter. Additional resources had now been put in place to in order to get performance back on track during Quarter 2 of 2013/14.

The Committee were satisfied with the action that the service had taken.

Members also considered other performance indicators which were reported to the committee and noted the accompanying explanation.

The Committee noted the report.

41 **CABINET REPORT REVIEW - COMMUNITY HALLS MANAGED BY CULTURE AND LEISURE SERVICES**

At its meeting on 26 October 2011, Cabinet agreed a report on Community Halls managed by Culture & Leisure services, as a follow-up the overview and scrutiny committee had requested a review of the recommendation in order to monitor the action.

The Head of Culture & Leisure presented a report that detailed the following progress on these recommendations.

1. The closure of Dukes Hall and to delegate to the Lead Member for Value and the Lead Member for Culture, Towns and Communities authority to agree terms for its disposal.

Update: Dukes Hall remained open until the end of July 2012 to specifically cater for a pre-school playgroup to ensure the children benefited from a complete 'academic' year. A majority of the regular hirers at Dukes Hall were helped with finding alternative venues. There were very few of the regular hirers that, despite our offers of assistance, did not let us know whether they found an alternative venue or otherwise. Dukes Hall has now been disposed of, with the purchasers of the site being Weston Homes plc.

2. To demolish Old Windmill Hall, to be initially funded from Capital Contingency, which would be reimbursed from the Dukes Hall receipt.

Update: Old Windmill Hall was demolished in autumn 2012.

3. In principle to a proportion of the capital receipt arising from the disposal of Dukes Hall being utilised to deal with urgent repair and maintenance issues at the New Windmill Hall and Tweed Way Hall, assuming that these two halls transfer to a community organisation under a lease agreement. To delegate the decision on the level of capital spend from the Dukes Hall receipt on alternative community halls managed by Culture and Leisure Services, to the Lead Member for Value and the Lead Member for Culture, Towns and Communities.

Update: Both New Windmill Hall and Tweed Way Hall were successfully transferred to two community organisations under a

Lease Agreement. An Executive Decision report (72/12) was signed on 17 April 2012 to agree that up to £100k could be spent on essential work that was highlighted within condition surveys for both New Windmill Hall and Tweed Way Hall. This sum was match funded with a £90k grant from Veolia, providing an overall investment of £190k. This was split with £136k investment at New Windmill Hall and £54k investment at Tweed Way Hall, in line with the urgent works required at each hall as set out in the respective condition surveys. The full allocation of funds would be spent addressing the essential items in the condition surveys.

The works at New Windmill Hall were almost completed, and are progressing well at Tweed Way Hall, with further works underway at the time of writing this report. New Windmill Hall has had the following works: roof/masonry repairs, cleaning of the heating ducts, a new kitchen, refurbished toilets, re-wiring and re-decoration. Tweed Way Hall has had the following works: New windows, refurbished toilets, re-decoration and general building works to the annexe. The works to replace the kitchen are currently being planned.

4. In principle to the transfer of the management of the New Windmill Hall to a community group or, in the event of this not proving possible, bring a further report back to Cabinet for consideration of subsequent options.

Update: A new Community Association had been formed comprising of users of New Windmill Hall. The New Windmill Hall Community Association was granted a lease on 6 August 2012 and was successfully managing the Hall. The Charity Commission formally registered the Association as a charity on 8 February 2013 (Reg. No. 1150748).

5. In principle to the transfer of the management of the Tweed Way Hall to a community group or, in the event of this not proving possible, bring a further report back to Cabinet for consideration of subsequent options.

Update: A new Community Association had been formed comprising of users of Tweed Way Hall. The Tweed Way Hall Community Association was granted separate leases for the Hall and an adjoining Storage Shed on 8 November 2012 and is successfully managing the Hall & Shed. An application for the Association to be formally registered with the Charity Commission as a charity is just about to be submitted.

6. To delegate decisions on all property matters associated with the transfer of New Windmill Hall and/or Tweed Way Hall, including the criteria for selecting the preferred voluntary group if more than one group expresses an interest in managing one of the halls, the selection of the preferred community group(s) and finalising lease

terms, to the Lead Member for Value and the Lead Member for Culture, Towns and Communities.

Update: The existing users of both New Windmill Hall and Tweed Way Hall agreed to set up new Community Associations to run and manage their respective halls. Two Executive Decisions have been signed agreeing the lease terms on 13 July 2012 for New Windmill Hall (75/12) and 8 October 2012 for Tweed Way Hall (120/12).

7. In principle to protect existing bookings at those community halls that transfer to a community group, to be set out in relevant agreements.

Update: All groups who decided that they wanted to continue their bookings at each of the halls were able to do so. Given that many of the regular hirers were represented on the Committee of the Community Associations, they were well placed to represent their particular group's interests.

8. To the demolition of the Old Windmill Hall building given the danger it posed to people who might try to enter the site, subject to the Dukes Hall site being disposed of and to be funded from the associated capital receipt.

Update: Old Windmill Hall was demolished in autumn 2012.

9. To receive a further report on the option of disposing of the Old Windmill Hall site and adjoining land, to secure further investment in the New Windmill Hall facility for the purposes of leasing the building to a community group and surrounding facilities, in the context of improving the local environment and taking account of the setting of nearby listed buildings.

Update: Reports regarding the disposal of the Old Windmill Hall site and adjoining land were considered by Cabinet on 13 February 2013 and the 14 August 2013. The first Cabinet report was confirmed by the Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2013. The second Cabinet report was also requisitioned and considered at this Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 September 2013. The Cabinet decision was confirmed at their meeting. As set out earlier in the report the works to address urgent items at New Windmill Hall have almost been completed.

10. In principle for Cottons Hall to be re-opened when a lease can be agreed with a suitable community organisation or, if this does not prove possible, to receive a further report on the future of the site.

Update: No community organisation has yet been found to manage the Hall and take on a lease. There was an initial interest from a sports club based at the site, but after a number of meetings and consideration by the club, there appears to be no further interest. The

Council are still awaiting written confirmation that the sports club have no interest in the Hall. This club are considered to be the most suitable occupants of the Hall given that they also occupy the changing rooms and showers that sit on the ground floor, with the Hall located above on the first floor. The Hall remains closed at this time and was secured whilst the changing rooms on the ground floor continue to be used.

42 **PRESENTATION ON HERITAGE BUILDINGS IN THE BOROUGH**

At the request of the Committee, the Historic Buildings & Landscapes Officer gave a presentation on heritage listed buildings and site that were owned and managed by the council.

The Committee was informed that Havering had a wealth of historic buildings and landscapes and it was most important that these buildings were properly looked after and maintained.

Members gathered that many significant buildings have been lost over the years such as:

Bedfords Park Mansion – Demolished in 1959

Dagnam Park Mansion - Demolished in 1948

Gidea Hall Mansion – Demolished in 1930

Stubbers House – Demolished in 1960

The Committee was informed that following a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, a full refurbishment of Langtons House & Gardens was carried out. This also enabled the exterior of the building to be painted and some fittings to be carried out. Staff mentioned that the Friends of Langtons had been very supportive and helpful in getting the restoration done.

The Historic Buildings & Landscapes Officer informed the committee that various heritage sites and properties were currently being restored by the service and others seeking further Heritage Lottery Fund.

The following buildings were mentioned:

Fairkytes House

Clockhouse & Gardens

Langtons Gazebo

Bridge at the Grove

The committee was informed that the service was in the process of helping Friends of Upminster Windmill develop and submit a stage two lottery grant application to restoring the windmill and build a work house.

Staff also highlighted the issue relating to the Upminster Tithe Barn, that the thashed roofing was now reaching the end of their span. It was mentioned that the nearest place to acquire the thashed roofing was in Norfolk and they would not be able to supply enough thashed roofing in a year. Staff had implemented a short term measures at this site by installing a new fire alarm and heat sensitive sensor on the roof.

The Historic Buildings & Landscapes Officer also informed Members that at the Breton Manor House and Tudor Barn, a review of the master plan was been undertaken in order to determine how to improve, maintain and manage the premise.

The Committee was informed that all the resortation work programmed at Raphael Park was now completed.

The Committee noted the presentation.

43 **PRESENTATION ON FRIENDS OF THE PARK IN THE BOROUGH**

At the request of the Committee, the Parks & Open Spaces Manager gave a presentation on Friends of the Park in the borough.

Members were informed that the Friends of the Park perform a range of tasks that added value to the work carried out by Parks Services.

Havering has 16 Parks Friends groups. These groups carry out a range of activities in the parks. They function in different ways and range in the numbers of members.

Havering's Parks Service and Community Regeneration Team have helped to set up many Friends Groups and providing them with a limited amount of financial support.

Members were informed that the Park Service define the objective of the official Friends programme as to improve the way in which we work with the Friends groups across Havering. The service also view that working together to an agreed plan for the parks would improve the standards, get more people using the parks and seeking more awards such as Green Flag.

In order to support Friends Group, the council would:

- Provide Parks free of charge for official Friends events
- Attend Friends meetings
- Provide an assistance package to the Friends (£1000 per annum)
- Annually agree at least one project to be delivered by the Friends (£5000)
- Annually deliver at least one project mutually agreed with Havering

The Committee was informed that as an Official Friends Group, the following requirement expected:

- Hold an AGM and elect officials into post
- Have a constitution
- Hold regular meetings
- Undertake works that are in line with the programme detailed in the Parks Management Plan
- Award each of those achieving the Official status with a plaque at the annual Parks Forum.
- Hold events that promote the park
- Produce literature or research that benefits the park
- Undertake fundraising to support the Friends activities and the park
- Attend the Parks Open Forum
- Spend any funds raised for the park in line with requirements of the Management Plan

Members noted that there were currently 9 Official Friends Groups

- Friends of Cottons Park
- Friends of King Georges Playing Field
- Friends of Bedfords Park
- Friends of Raphael Park and Lodge Farm Park
- Friends of Langtons Gardens
- Friends of Harold Wood Parks
- Friends of Upminster Park
- Friends of St Andrews Park
- Friends of Hornchurch Country Park and the Ingrebourne Valley

The Committee noted the presentation.

Chairman