

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Council Chamber - Town Hall
6 March 2025 (7.00 - 9.15 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group David Taylor (Chairman), Ray Best and Judith Holt

Havering Residents' Group Philippa Crowder, John Wood and +Christine Smith

Labour Group Matthew Stanton (Vice-Chair)

East Havering Residents Group Darren Wise

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillor Laurance Garrard and Councillor Robby Misir. (Councillor Christine Smith was subbing)

Also in attendance were Cabinet Member for Regeneration Councillor Graham Williamson, Councillor Jane Keane, Councillor Judith Holt, Councillor Nisha Patel and Councillor Dilip Patel.

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

77 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillor Laurance Garrard and Councillor Robby Misir. +(Councillor Christine Smith substituting).

78 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillor David Taylor disclosed a personal, non-prejudicial interest on the basis that he is a Councillor for the St Edwards ward covering much of Romford Town Centre.

79 ROMFORD MASTERPLAN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING PRE DECISION SCRUTINY

As part of the Sub-Committee's oversight, Members received a briefing on the development of the Romford Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document, for the final stage of seeking approval to adopt the Romford

Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as planning policy by Cabinet at its next meeting. It was stated that the Masterplan has been drafted and consulted on in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Havering Local Plan sets out the detailed policy for Romford and commits to the delivery of a Supplementary Planning Document for the area, recognising the significant opportunities that Romford offers. The Masterplan develops and supplements the Havering Local Plan and sets out a framework to shape and guide development in Romford over the next 15-20 years.

It was stated that the purpose of the Masterplan will be instrumental in guiding Romford's ongoing evolution over the next 15-20 years. Its aim is to draw on Romford's unique character and to continue to evolve it into a place which respects and reveals its history whilst looking forward to deliver growth and opportunities that will benefit the entire community.

The report highlighted that Romford offers exciting regeneration and development opportunities and is expected to accommodate significant levels of housing and economic growth in the coming years. It is identified as an Opportunity Area in the London Plan and designated as a Strategic Development Area (SDA) in the Havering Local Plan. The Masterplan is needed to guide these opportunities in a way that respects Romford's qualities and history, strengthens pride in the town, and makes it a distinct and attractive place to live, work, and visit.

The Masterplan proposes a series of key spatial moves that establish the physical structure and interventions to achieve the long-term vision for Romford town centre:

- Opening up the River Rom - The River Rom will be deculverted and partially renaturalised through the town centre to create an ecological linear park.
- Recharacterising the ring road – creating an active travel corridor with at-grade crossings, planting and an urban boulevard character, better integrating the town centre with the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Celebrating Romford Market - Reinforcing the importance of the market place as a key civic space by upgrading the public realm improving frontages and introducing spaces that can support a variety of events and gatherings.
- Reinstating the historic urban grain - Introducing new streets and spaces that reflect the finer historic urban grain of the town centre with smaller, more walkable blocks with varied and engaging building frontages.
- Wider green links - Introducing new green links that can act as walking and cycling corridors both through the town centre and connecting to wider key public green spaces and parks.

- New and improved station entrances - Creating a new station entrance that acts as a gateway to the town centre and improving the existing station entrance with public realm enhancements, seating and wayfinding.

The Sub-Committee noted the following key themes and objectives to guide the delivery of the Masterplan.

- Space and landscape - The Masterplan promotes a wide range of safe, public spaces including high quality streets, pocket parks, squares and roof gardens. Blue and green networks through the town centre will be strengthened. The River Rom will be the centre piece of these networks as a new linear riverside park.
- Movement and Connectivity - The Masterplan improves access, connectivity and permeability across Romford. Public transport and active travel choices, such as walking and cycling, are promoted to encourage healthy lifestyles and considered equitably with other modes of travel. Reconfigured streets and public realm will create a more attractive, safe and inclusive Romford.
- Sustainability - ensuring growth is built on a platform of sustainable infrastructure with environmental and wellbeing benefits. Environmental, social and economic sustainability is a golden thread that runs through the Masterplan.
- Inclusivity, Health and Wellbeing - all developments, public realm, transport and projects will have inclusive design at their heart. The Masterplan provides guidance to promote social cohesion and to create opportunities to diversify and to also improve health and wellbeing through better accessibility, infrastructure and resources.
- Character and Townscape - The Masterplan draws on the existing qualities and unique assets of Romford. The setting of Romford's historic places and buildings will be enhanced. New developments will contribute by positively supporting existing or evolving character areas through new and enhanced buildings, streets and spaces.
- Uses and Mix - The Masterplan promotes a diverse Romford that is active throughout all times of the day. In the central area smaller shops and a more varied food and drink offer will support the vibrancy of the centre and an enhanced early evening economy. Employment and business space will be enhanced. Key locations and public spaces will be anchored by cultural and leisure uses to drive footfall. New residential within the town centre will support existing and new businesses but will also require corresponding social infrastructure including schools, public spaces, health facilities and transport.

- The Economy - The Masterplan capitalises on Romford's unique position at the interface between Essex and London to promote Romford as a destination, to support existing businesses and attract new occupiers. The Masterplan seeks to broaden the early evening and night-time economies, revitalise Market Place and enhancing retail, business and residential offers. This diversification will create new jobs and support the vitality and long-term viability of Romford.

Members received satisfactory responses to all questions raised. The Sub-Committee welcomed the Master Plan and commended the report to Cabinet for its approval.

The Sub-Committees asked that Cabinet consider and respond to the following recommendations:

Members provided the following comments & suggestions to support the delivery of the Master Plan Supplementary Report:

- The Sub-Committee (S/C) support the need for an Inward Investment in Romford Strategy, related launch events and would like to see further details when available.
- The Sub-Committee asked for all the referred to associated documents such as the IDP & Local Plan to be updated accordingly and advised when that has happened and to have sight of them.
- The S/C are interested in the growth of small retail businesses in Romford and are keen to encourage this.
- The S/C are interested in what the plan will encourage and deliver in regards to economic growth, and how the requisite skills and employment will be achieved.
- The S/C hope that the new jobs will increase residents' employability and household incomes.
- The S/C are interested in how the Master Plan will be funded and also the provision of more schools/school places in support of the Plan.
- The S/C are interested in Romford developing as a place of learning taking the Queens Hospital University as a key driver for this.
- The S/C are interested in the future demand on health facilities, in particular the adequacy of the development of additional medical hubs to support the Queens Hospital.
- The S/C asked if the plan or related plans could consider attracting wider further education facilities, e.g. a university, college or skills academy.

Chairman