

Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Updates 19 April 2017

Since the last meeting of the Board, the Sub-Committee had met on one occasion and the following is a summary of issues discussed:

1. Romford Market Transformation

The Sub-Committee were advised that planning permission had been granted for the Market House and agents had been appointed to secure a pre-let for the unit. Four contractors have been invited to submit a full tender to build the Market House.

Marlborough who were the principle contractor for the utility works would be invited to undertake the Public Realm works.

The provisional programme for the works had been submitted and it was anticipated that everything would be completed by the week commencing 25 June 2018.

The Sub-Committee had concerns at the overall programme for improvement encompassing the East End, Market House and West End, car parking and public realm. They have asked officers to indicate where the decision to proceed had been taken, together with full details of all the proposed works. Cabinet at its meetings on 18 November and 16 December 2015 had given an in principle approval to the proposals but at that time insufficient detail was available.

The Sub-Committee request the Board to carry out an in depth review of the proposals with officers providing full details of all approvals showing clearly what proposals have been approved, a detailed Business Plan supporting the proposals and detailed budget indicating clearly where funding was already approved, this review to be undertaken before any tender is let for the building of the Market House.

Officers had prepared a tender specification for the development of a new market brand and identity and final preparations were being made to launch a tender exercise for the appointment of a marketing specialist.

The events which had been organised in the run up to Christmas had seen an increase in footfall and officers were preparing a programme of events for 2017 commencing with activity over Easter.

The feasibility of a Christmas Lights switch-on and provision of an ice rink over Christmas and New Year was being evaluated.

Having established a baseline which showed the average weekly footfall was 142,133 a growth strategy would now be developed in line with the vision.

A new Market Manager had been appointed in January who was focusing on a number of key transformational areas. These included a trader incentive scheme to support recruitment and retention during the construction phase and developing an operational plan to accommodate and relocate existing permanent traders who would be displaced during the Market House build.

2. A Literacy Strategy for Havering

The Strategy set out how the Council and partners would improve Literacy levels in the borough and included an Action Plan that identified the priority actions for the next three years.

The Strategy sets out a Vision for Literacy for the next three years: 'For all in Havering to enjoy and feel confident in the English Language'. The purpose of the strategy was to ensure better coordination of work to support literacy development in Havering.

The Strategy and associated Action Plan focussed on the following groups:

- Early Years (0-4 Years)
- Children (5 – 11 Years)
- Young People (11-19 Years)
- Adults with Low Literacy.

Following the restructure of the Library Service in 2015/16 the service relies on volunteers to deliver the Strategy. The biggest challenge is to engage the 11-19 age group.

3. 2 Metre high front walls and appeal decision.

As requested by Council the Sub-Committee have reviewed the issue of walls which had been erected at the front of a property in the borough and any action that could be taken as a consequence. Officers had advised that following the decision to refuse a lawful use certificate the owner of the premises had lodged an appeal. The inspector appointed to hear the appeal had upheld the council's position.

Officers had attempted to open negotiations with the owners to reach an equitable solution. To date the owners had not engaged.

The Sub-Committee indicated to officers that they should set a deadline for the owners to engage, and once this passed to proceed with enforcement action to require the reduction of the wall to no more than 1 metre in height.

4. TOPIC GROUP – ASB IN COUNCIL TENANCY

The Topic Group has concluded its review and agreed to submit the report to Cabinet with the following recommendation:

‘Following the review exercise undertaken with officers, the Topic Group supports the Housing Services and Public Protection operating a joint service dealing with statutory noise nuisance consistently. This would be via a shared Nuisance Information Pack advising residents of the new procedure. There are various legal remedies that can be used such as Section 80 of the EPA 1990 and the Crime & Policing Act 2015; however the Housing Service can also use Tenancy Terms & Conditions to deal with some issues relating to noise nuisance.

It is recommended that a Policy and Procedure is produced and implemented defining the new joint service. This will also demonstrate how the Council was dealing with noise nuisance in a consistent and as far as is possible tenure neutral manner for all residents.

The Topic Group agreed that in regular communication with all tenants there would be a notice added highlighting any evictions for ASB and a gentle reminder of tenants own obligations.’

The Topic Group were particular keen that every effort be made to communicate to tenants the actions which the Council have taken to deal with ASB in Council Tenancies.