

Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Summary of Work Undertaken 2019/20

INTRODUCTION

This report is the annual report of the Sub-Committee, summarising the Sub-Committee's activities during its year of operation ended May 2020.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to have a record of the Committee's activities and performance.

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Ray Best (Chairman)
Councillor Robby Misir (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Keith Darvill
Councillor Tony Durdin
Councillor Paul Middleton
Councillor Gerry O'Sullivan
Councillor Timothy Ryan
Councillor Carol Smith
Councillor Christopher Wilkins

During the year under review, the sub-committee met on four occasions and dealt with the following issues:

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Throughout the year the Sub-Committee continued to receive the Quarterly Performance Reports that had previously been reported to Cabinet and Demand Pressure Dashboards which illustrated the growing demands on Council services and the context that the performance levels set out in the reports had been achieved within.

UPDATE - ADOPTION OF THE SEX ESTABLISHMENT LICENSING POLICY AND ADOPTION OF SCHEDULE 3 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1982

In accordance with the Council's Continuous Improvement Model, the Sub-Committee received a briefing on the Sex Establishment Licensing Policy that was adopted by Council in early 2015.

The Policy recommended that the maximum number of sex establishments for all wards in the borough was zero.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Licensing Authority received very few enquiries from premises that were considering an application. All prospective applicants were referred to the Council's Policy.

Members were informed that to date there have been no legal challenge to the Policy. The Licensing Authority indicated that there were no licensed sex establishments in the borough.

ROMFORD TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

At the request of a Member, the Sub-Committee received a report on the Romford Town Centre Masterplan project.

The report provided a summary of work undertaken to date in respect of the Town Centre Masterplan project that was commissioned in October 2018 to deliver a comprehensive, design-led development framework for Romford.

It was noted that the objective of the project was to develop a masterplan that would guide and facilitate Romford's future growth appropriately and sustainably, building on its unique characteristics to deliver a high quality, cohesive and vibrant town centre for Havering.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the intention was to adopt the masterplan document as formal planning policy so that it becomes a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD would form part of a suite of sub-policies under the Boroughs Local Plan (LP) when this is adopted in 2020. The Council's Local Plan had been submitted to the Secretary of State.

The Sub-Committee noted that consultation on the planning Inspector's proposed modifications to the Local Plan would take place in early 2020.

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Romford would be a mixed and vibrant regional Town Centre with a distinct character. It would consist of a refined retail offer complimented by a rejuvenated market, with a focus on local goods and services, maintaining its role as a major leisure destination, with an enlarged employment offer, an early evening food and beverage offer and new residential community.

The masterplan vision was supported by 8 interrelated objectives. These objectives were supported by strategies to provide guidance on how to turn the objectives in to good growth and deliver the social infrastructure that was needed to support growth.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the masterplan team had also engaged with partners and stakeholders to inform the development of the masterplan.

The Sub-Committee was informed that a Member briefing was planned for the future including an opportunity for a walkabout on one of the sites.

HOUSING REPAIRS AND GAS SAFETY CHECKS

At the February 2020 meeting an update on the provision of responsive repairs and carrying out gas safety checks to Council owned and managed housing stock. Following on from the initial report from July 2019.

As part of its statutory duties as a landlord the Council is required to undertake responsive repairs to its properties. This includes those associated with gas appliances and heating systems.

Following a procurement exercise, in accordance with the Public Contract legislation, in 2014 a five year contract was awarded to the Breyer Group. The contract is on a Price Per Property basis, and subject to inflation uplift. Repairs deemed “out of scope” are priced and agreed in accordance with a pre priced schedule of rates.

Due to the specialist nature of the gas service, in 2018, two specialist providers were appointed to provide responsive repairs and planned servicing to gas appliances and heating installations. The appointed contractors are K&T Heating for domestic installations and BSW Ltd for communal (commercial) installations. BSW were changed to Stonegrove in August due to performance issues. The payment structure was for payment on completion of each service or repair request.

The current contract with Breyer expired in March 2019 and approval was obtained to extend the contract for a further two years until March 2021 to enable re-procurement.

There have been major improvements in Breyer’s performance and more robust contract management, an often visited improvement plan and a shift in attitude from both client and contractor side has seen Breyer achieve their main KPI target.

With regards to gas servicing earlier performance issues had been addressed through contract supervision meetings and the corrective actions in place were beginning to deliver better quality by both contractors.

TOPIC GROUP UPDATE

HOUSING REPAIRS TOPIC GROUP - UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received a briefing on the current status of Housing Repairs as part of the ongoing scrutiny review from the previous year.

It was reported that there were the service maintained over 10,000 properties across the borough by using a term contractor, Breyer, and several small local contractors on an Ad Hoc basis.

It was noted that there were issues with the contractor performance around completed jobs within agreed timescales.

The report informed that in November 2018 the number of overdue jobs rose to 756. This had an impact on the main KPI, jobs completed within time, which dipped to 84% against a target of 95%. This had a direct effect on the number of complaints received.

The Sub-Committee noted improvements that had been made and other ongoing plans to give residents a quality repairs service:

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Legal implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Equalities implications and risks:

While the work of the Sub-Committee can impact on all members of the community, there are no implications arising from this specific report which is a narrative of the Sub-Committee's work over the past year.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of meetings of Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee 2019/20.