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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB- COMMITTEE
Virtual Meeting
16 December 2020 (5.00 - 7.00 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Ray Best (Chairman), +John Crowder, Timothy Ryan, Carol Smith, Keith Darvill, Paul Middleton, Gerry O'Sullivan and Christopher Wilkins

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robby Misir.
+Councillor John Crowder substituted for Councillor Misir.

It was noted that Councillor Tony Durdin was absent

22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

23 PROTOCOL ON THE OPERATION OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE

The Sub-Committee noted the protocol on the operation of meetings during the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions.

24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

A Member sought a response to a discussion and submission relating to Housing licensing arrangements that was debated by the sub-committee. This would be raised with the appropriate officers.

25 HOUSING STRATEGY

The report before Members sought the input of the sub-committee in the vision and draft objectives of the proposed Housing Strategy and plans for consultation with a proposed timetable.

It was stated that the current housing strategy covered a successful period of delivering valuable services to residents but it was now recognised that a strategy was required to take into account the ever-changing environment.

The Sub-Committee noted that the council like many local authorities, faces huge challenges not only in housing but also in social care, health and other public services. The challenge was more demanding taking into account the potential impact on the Council from the covid-19 pandemic.

The report informed that the council was committed to tackling the 'Housing Crisis' both in providing the much needed new affordable homes for local people and supporting vulnerable members of society acquiring a home proud to live in.

Officers stated that building new homes remains a high priority to meet the needs of the fast growing population in Havering. The Council was taking pro-active approach to housing delivery, as it recognises the importance of ensuring that there was affordable homes for local people.

The council was working with partners to build new homes, with an ambitious 12 estates regeneration programme across existing council estates to revitalise Havering's Housing and investing in building new communities.

In response to the definition of affordable homes for first time buyer. The sub-committee was informed that affordable homes would mean different things to an individual.

Members were informed that the proposal was for the council to deliver a new Housing Strategy for the 5-year period 2021–26. The strategy would form part of a joined up approach to tackling the housing challenges for all residents of Havering.

A member welcomed the joined up approach for a borough wide strategy to deliver homes.

The sub-committee whilst welcoming the strategy sought details on infrastructure for all the proposed new homes. In response members were informed that due diligence was been undertaken as part of pre application presentation for each housing development.

The report detailed that the underpinning principle to the new Housing Strategy remain a commitment to a borough that is Cleaner, Safer, Prouder, Together.

Members noted that a presentation on the draft vision and objectives for the Housing Strategy was made to Senior Leadership Team, Housing Resident Participation Panel, Councillors and the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Following these consultations, some amendments were made to the original draft objectives and this now formed the basis for a further consultation with other stakeholders and residents between December to February 2021.

Officers were seeking the involvement of the sub-committee in the ongoing consultation. A link to the consultation would be circulated to the sub-committee.

A Member suggested that provision of social infrastructure to supplement the new build be considered as a selling point.

A Member was of the opinion that the housing strategy should give priority to key workers and ex-service personal in the allocation of the new homes. In response officers encouraged members of the sub-committee to comment on the ongoing consultation.

The sub-committee noted the presentation.

26 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BRIEFING PLANNING UPDATE**

The Assistant Director Planning delivered a presentation to the sub-committee that outlined the key proposals and changes to the planning system that have come forward in 2020.

The presentation outlined the following changes to planning legislation since 2020:

In March an amendment allowed a change of use from restaurants and cafes and drinking establishments (A3 and A4 uses) to a temporary use for the provision of takeaway food. Permitted development rights relating to takeaways.

Members noted that the amendment was in response to the Covid19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on these businesses during lockdown and would apply until to 23 March 2022.

In April an amendment introduced permitted development rights relating to emergency development allowing local authorities and certain health bodies to carry out development of facilities required in undertaking their roles in response to the spread of coronavirus.

The Sub-Committee was informed that in August 2020, the government made a number of amendments to permitted development rights to allow development that assisted in supporting the Government's economic renewal package following the Covid19 outbreak. The amendments included:

- Enabling a local authority to hold a market for an unlimited number of days until 23rd March 2021.
- Temporary permission for local authorities to use any land for holding a market until March 2022
- Permanent permitted development right to allow additional storeys to be constructed on existing purpose-built blocks of flats to create new homes, subject to prior approval.
- Requiring new homes delivered through permitted development rights to provide adequate natural light for the occupants.

The changes also included a Business and Planning Act that was aimed to restart the economy in response to the pandemic and introducing a range of

new measures to help businesses to quickly adjust and adapt to changing circumstances.

It was also stated that since August 2020, Permitted Development rights relating to upward extensions was introduced which allowed detached, semi-detached or in a terrace to be extended upwards to provide additional living space by constructing additional storeys, subject to prior approval.

Members noted that there was also changes to the Permitted Development relating to demolitions since August 2020. This amendment allows for demolition of single detached buildings and the construction of new dwelling houses in their place, subject to prior approval.

In September, amendments were made that allowed changes to the use of classes, introducing three new use classes with the aim of supporting economic renewal and help businesses adapt to changing circumstances.

In November further amendments were made that removed permitted development rights relating to demolition. This explained that the demolition of any building used as a concert hall, venue for live music performance or theatre was no longer classed as permitted development. This permanent change is to protect these venues, preventing their unnecessary loss as a result of having to close due to the Covid19 pandemic.

The Sub-Committee was informed that from 6 April 2021 an amendment that allows dwellings delivered by permitted development rights meeting the nationally described space standard would be introduced. The standard sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling heights.

Members noted the update.

27 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Sub-Committee agreed to receive updates on the Housing Allocation Policy and Planning & Building Control performance at future meetings.

Chairman

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