

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

MEMBERS: Councillors Mahmut Aksanoglu, Maria Alexandrou, Susan Erbil, Margaret Greer (Chair), Charith Gunawardena and Edward Smith

Officers: Sarah Cary (Executive Director Place), Helen Murch (Head of Strategic Planning and Design), Penelope Williams (Secretary), Metin Halil (Producer)

Also Attending: 3 members of the public

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leaver, Stewart and Akpinar and from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Nesil Caliskan who had been called away unexpectedly.

Councillor Gunawardena was standing in for Councillor Akpinar.

Each member introduced themselves to the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. INTRODUCTION - PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The Chair explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to allow members of the scrutiny panel to devise a work programme for the coming year.

This item was proceeded by a presentation on the Government's new proposals for the planning system.

4. PLANNING REFORM

The panel members received a presentation from Helen Murch (Head of Strategic Planning and Design) on the recent and proposed Government changes to the planning system. Copies of the slides are available on the website or from the Committee Secretary.

The following points were highlighted in the presentation:

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1. There were three types of change under discussion: changes recently introduced, proposed changes to the current planning system and radical planning reform. Consultation on the planning changes ends on the 1 October 2020 and on the Planning White Paper on 29 October.
2. The recently introduced changes involved changes to the use classes and permitted development orders. They were part of the Government's Build, Build, Build agenda to encourage more housing development.
3. These changes were subject to legal challenge by groups with climate change concerns.
4. If put into effect they would give developers greater freedom to create new homes, without needing planning permission, and to use vacant and redundant buildings to encourage high street revival.
5. The Government were reducing the current number of use classes considerably. This could have a significant impact in Enfield.
6. The changes to the general permitted development rights had been designed to support the Government's economic renewal package and would create a new right for temporary use of land, a new natural light requirement for domestic homes and the right to add additional stories to existing buildings.
7. Conservation areas would not be subject to the permitted development rights.
8. Four changes were being proposed to the current system: these were changes to the local system for assessing housing need, support for helping people to buy their first homes, lifting small sites threshold for affordable housing, extension of the current permission in principle to major development.
9. These changes could be introduced very quickly, possibly by the end of the year.
10. The new Government Planning White Paper was consulting on radical reform, "to simplify, speed up and get rid of red tape, whilst enhancing the beauty and delivery of infrastructure development".
11. It was a set of high-level ideas with little detail of how they would work, containing a series of options for reform, covering plan making, development management and development contributions.
12. Radical reform was unlikely to be introduced quickly, as it would require primary and secondary legislation.
13. The intention was that all planning law would be replaced and local plans simplified, shortened and rules based.
14. The key proposals included a controversial zoning approach dividing areas into growth, renewal and protected areas.
15. Development management and design codes would be set nationally rather than locally.
16. Methods of engagement would be mainly digital.
17. Community engagement would take place at the plan making, rather than the individual application stage.
18. A new test of soundness would be developed.
19. There would be sanctions for those authorities who failed to get the plan through all the key stages within 2.5 years. Plans can currently take up to 7 years or longer to be finalised.

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20. There would be an automatic refund of planning application fees if applications were not considered on time. These costs would fall on the Council.
21. The community infrastructure levy and the S106 would be replaced.
22. Building targets would be set for 300,000 homes annually.

Comments and Questions

1. Members thanked Helen Murch for delivering the report.
2. In response to a question on sanctions, it was not clear what sanctions would be imposed, but they would be financial.
3. The digital engagement proposals assumed that everyone had a smart phone and could download data hungry applications. This would have implications for the IT capability of not only individuals, but also libraries which would need increased capacity.
4. The government were hoping that more people would want to engage at the local plan stage, but generally people were more interested in specific planning applications that directly affected them.
5. It was not clear how these changes would affect the role of councillors on the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee was only mentioned once in the whole report.
6. In areas which were zoned for growth, it would be assumed that planning permission would be granted automatically. In Enfield, reserved matters would come to planning committee, but this would not be so in every Council.
7. The proposals focus on the role of plan making, not specific planning applications. The bigger strategic issues would be decided at Cabinet or Council.
8. In future reports to the panel would be circulated earlier with the agenda.

5. REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR 2020/21

Sarah Cary (Executive Director Place) gave a presentation on the Council's priorities in the area of regeneration and economic development.

She highlighted the following:

- The key priorities from the Council Corporate Plan: creating a lifetime of opportunities in Enfield – good homes in well connected neighbourhoods, safe healthy and confident communities, an economy that works for everyone.
- In August Enfield had 52,000 people on furlough which was 35-40% of the working population. Levels of unemployment are predicted to be very high. It could be 1 person in 3.
- In Town Centres footfall was still well below pre-covid averages at 60-80%.
- Enfield was preparing for future possible local lockdowns.

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- Following 10 years of austerity and high levels of deprivation it was a difficult time for the Council with lots of demands on services.
- Key strands of regeneration and economic development activity included:
 - To help residents and businesses to recover from the pandemic and to support them during the recession.
 - To improve the borough offer for employment and training, particularly for those economic inactive who are seeking employment.
 - To implement the Housing and Good Growth Strategy, including housing development programme and estate regeneration.
 - To progress the development of Enfield's local plan in the context of significant planning reform.
 - To agree and approve a Cultural Strategy and an Economic Development Strategy.
 - To continue to deliver on Meridian Water.

- A list of suggestions for the work programme was set out.

6. AGREEING THE WORKPROGRAMME 2020/21

Sarah Cary (Executive Director Place) and Helen Murch (Head of Strategic Planning and Design) left the meeting at this point.

The members of the scrutiny panel discussed the work programme.

The following suggestions were put forward:

- Economic Development Strategy
- How local businesses can survive and/or respond to the Covid Crisis in town centres
- Local Plan and the proposed Government changes to planning policy
- Taking forward the work of the Meridian Water Scrutiny Workstream. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was due to make a recommendation that this panel should monitor the recommendations from the workstream review. The 8 December would be an ideal meeting for a first report.
- Standing item on Meridian Water – there was confirmation that this would be included on the agenda for at least two meetings, the first at the December meeting'
- Joyce and Snell's Estate Redevelopment
- Other estate redevelopment schemes including Ladderswood, Alma, New Avenue and Electric Quarter.
- Regeneration of the High Street – the digital impact and the need to redesign community space.
- The Improving Enfield Shopping Areas Scrutiny Workstream report was close to completion. The recommendations from this could be monitored by this panel.

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- Housing Needs Assessment – types and sizes of proposed new homes.
- Culture Strategy
- Economic Development Strategy
- Skills and Training
- Redevelopment of Enfield and Edmonton Green shopping centres.

The Chair summed up by saying that a work programme would be put together incorporating the above together with the suggestions from Sarah Cary. The panel would also leave space for some flexibility to enable other issues to be added, if necessary, as they arose over the course of the year.

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The panel noted the terms of reference of the Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Panel as agreed at Council on 1 July 2020.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED the dates scheduled for future meetings:

- Tuesday 13 October 2020 (additional meeting date agreed)
- Tuesday 8 December 2020
- Wednesday 3 February 2021
- Wednesday 17 March 2021

Tuesday 13 October 2020

- Culture Strategy – workshop/discussion on draft before cabinet approval
- Economic Development Strategy – workshop/discussion on draft before cabinet approval

Tuesday 8 December 2020

- Local Plan – discussion on historic housing delivery, the housing delivery test, and new proposed policies and plans
- Meridian Water – review of how the project is supporting Enfield's economic development
- Skills and Training - discussion on partnership with colleges and work with Local London to address unemployment in the borough

Wednesday 3 February 2021

- Estate Regeneration – discussion on the social, environmental and economic outcomes of Alma, Ladderswood, New Avenue and Electric Quarter
- Local Plan – discussion on emerging policies

Wednesday 17 March 2021

- Joyce and Snells – review of regeneration project structure and outcomes
- Meridian Water – discussion on how the project is addressing local needs and supporting resident health and wellbeing

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The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.