

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2021**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors Margaret Greer, Charith Gunawardena, Tim Leaver, Andy Milne, Edward Smith and Claire Stewart

**Officers:**

Sam Buckley (Head of Knowledge and Insights), Bob Doyle, (Housing Development and Estate Regeneration Programme Manager), Nnenna Urum-Eke( Head of Development), Amena Matin (Housing Development and Estate Regeneration Programme Manager) and Metin Halil (Governance Officer)

**Also Attending:**

### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair, Councillor Margaret Greer welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Councillors Chinelo Anyanwu (Substitute Cllr Claire Stewart) and Mahmut Aksanoglu. Apologies had also been received from Sarah Cary, Executive Director Place and Joanne Drew, Director of Housing and Regeneration.

### **2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

NOTED

1. Councillor Tim Leaver declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was the Chair of Housing Gateway Limited, a Council Company.
2. Councillor Claire Stewart declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6 (Business Support) as the Cabinet Member mentioned in the report was a relative of hers. She would leave the meeting after the first item (item 5) had been heard.

### **3. INTRODUCTION - PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

NOTED

1. The purpose of the meeting is to look at the Annual Review of Housing Development which will be a presentation from the Head of Housing Development (Nnenna Urum-Eke) and a report regarding Business Support from the Head of Knowledge & Insights (Sam Buckley) and the Head of Economic Development (Bob Doyle).

### **4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2021 were received and agreed as a correct record.

### 5. ANNUAL REVIEW OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The scrutiny panel received a presentation from Nnenna Urum-Eke (Head of Development) updating members on the Annual Review of the Housing Development Pipeline.

#### 1. Presentation

During the presentation, Nnenna Urum-Eke highlighted the following:

- The Council's housing programme was on track to build more than 3500 new council led homes by 2030.
- To date 1047 affordable units are being committed to be delivered through the GLA's Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) 2016-23.
- In the last year the Council are on -site or being completed 366 units and with a further 669 units on site by 2022.
- It was announced recently, that the Council had received an affordable housing allocation from the GLA of £167M to deliver 1,119 units. This was the second highest allocation among local authorities and the 5<sup>th</sup> highest funding allocation overall, as detailed in the table within the presentation.
- Current market conditions, impacting the programme over the past 18 months, were reported including; the pandemic, Brexit, climate change and the Suez Canal back log. The market therefore at present is quite volatile both in terms of supply of goods and labour. The impact would be higher costs and delays to the delivery times, to the programme due to supply issues and contractor uncertainty. Despite this the Council has still been able to deliver achieving 336 new homes on site during a difficult period.
- The programme is not purely through direct delivery, the Council are working with partners and are acquiring units from the market as well as delivering itself. This was a balanced approach insulating some issues going on in the market.
- Partnership schemes (as detailed in the presentation) were reported against sites at New Avenue, Ladderswood, Alma Estate and Electric Quarter, providing progress details and completion time estimates/predictions.
- Direct Delivery schemes (as detailed in the presentation) were reported against Newstead House, Maldon Road, Gatward Green and Bury Street West, providing progress details and completion time estimates/predictions.
- The Council are also providing over 669 new homes on site through direct delivery and acquisitions by 2022. Details provided for these sites at Exeter Road, Upton & Raynham, Dandridge Close and Bullsmoor Lane, including the number of units and timescales.

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- The Council had also acquired 240 council homes as detailed in the presentation regarding Meridian Water in partnership with Mistry.
- Sites relating to funding in relation to the recent grant received from the GLA. The Joyce & Snells direct delivery scheme had been allocated £54M to progress phases on the site and to deliver around 2,000 new homes. The Council are also looking to provide infill schemes on the Alma Estate looking at garage sites around the estate (on Main Avenue, Bush Hill Park) providing 86 units around this scheme.
- Partnership delivery scheme at the Oswald & Newdale site with RP partner to deliver 438 new homes (the Council retaining 156).
- Two sites acquired, relating to small build direct delivery, at South Place in Ponders End and Hyde Park Avenue in Bush Hill Park using SME consultants and contractor.
- 120 units delivered through a Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) consortium with Barking, Waltham Forest, Newham, Haringey and Redbridge across 5 sites detailed within the presentation.

### 2. Questions/Comments

- a. The Council are looking at EDAROTH (everyone deserves a roof over their head) and ZED PODS Ltd companies to provide the factory-made buildings in some housing schemes.
- b. Concern regarding MMC (Modern Methods of Construction) and that the supply chains the Council use are robust enough to deliver a long-term programme. The Council were using a consortium of 5 Local Authorities because a factory to be viable it needs a supply chain with a back order of 3000 over 5 years which is the length of the mix of programmes. Between the 5 Local Authorities the Council has exceeded this. Therefore, the Council will be choosing 3 providers with skill, financial backing and resilience. Waltham Forest Council would be leading the exercise to set up the framework and doing the due diligence around that.
- c. The presentation summary was clarified. The total target of 3500 new council homes was for the next 10 years and the other figures in the summary were extracted from the total figure of 3500.
- d. As well as larger Registered Partners (RP) the council would also be supporting smaller RP's to deliver 2,268 new council homes. The Oswald & Newdale development would be done in partnership and the council would be seeking a partner who would be the first through the new framework. A mixed portfolio of options is required to deliver the programme.

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- e. Concern at how well the council are doing as regards delivering new homes. From the target of 3500 the council had delivered 366 new homes in the last 12 months. The Council has a target of 1047 new council homes which it needs to achieve by 2023. This is the council's initial first tranche of grant funding. The Council are on track in achieving the target of 1047 by 2023 through a mixed portfolio. Overall, it had been a difficult year, but the council were on target to meet its grant obligations. In terms of the programme envisaged, there had been a lot of slippage with a cost increase. In terms of medium-term success, the Council were on track as recorded in the quarter 1 Cabinet report.
- f. Confirmation that the Council will be able to deliver the proposed 3500 council homes over the next 9 years. Including the eventual achievement of the new local plan target of 1200 homes per year.
- g. The Council had been allocated 20-50% more money per housing unit than the top 3 allocations by the GLA. This was due to officers seeking a higher grant rate looking at the following:
  - Build cost inflation.
  - Forward forecasting the bid over the next 10 years as regards the market.
  - Recognition that social rent income is lower than the council has had in the past and is therefore more affordable for residents but makes viability more challenging.
  - Good negotiating by officers to negotiate more money per homes than other councils.
- h. In terms of delivery, the council through its partnership schemes and direct delivery are delivering more housing in Enfield than any other developer. In recognition of the council's housing issues raised by my members i.e. temporary accommodation, overcrowding, housing waiting lists and affordability.
- i. Concern that a report should be provided in a transparent way to highlight the real housing issues in the borough. The Chair clarified that she had sent out information and had asked all members of the committee to send details of what they would want presented at this committee for scrutiny/questions. Only one response was received. As regards the committee's work programme, the Chair acknowledged concern about shared ownership, needs

and vision but this topic was not received by the Chair for inclusion onto the current work programme. The Chair took note of the topic and would ask officers to emphasise on where the difficulties are and how the council are looking to measure this, to make it as realistic as possible.

### **3. Summing up by the Chair**

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and noted that there is assurance from the GLA funding and the confidence they have in Enfield's ability to try and achieve an incredibly difficult situation in terms of its housing needs.

## **6. BUSINESS SUPPORT: COVID AND POST COVID**

At this point, Cllr Claire Stewart left the meeting and took no further part in the proceedings.

The scrutiny panel received a report from Bob Doyle (Head of Economic Development, Regeneration Planning & Program Management) and Sam Buckley (Head of Knowledge & Insights) updating members on Business Support: Covid and Post Covid.

### **2. Presentation**

The following was highlighted by Sam Buckley and Bob Doyle:

- a. Most of the financial support schemes were now closed apart from the Additional Restrictions Grant which is still ongoing.
- b. In terms of financial support to date, the council has received financial support to distribute to local businesses through direct grants and business rates relief as detailed on pages 7-8 of the report.
- c. The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is a special amount of money given to Local authorities by the Government, who were asked to come up with their own scheme to distribute funds through direct grants to businesses. The council ran an application scheme process and were successful in spending £9.6M out to approximately 1800 businesses. Many small home-based businesses and freelancers benefitted from this scheme ARG.

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- d. A further £2.3M in further grants was received from central government and the council must now devise a plan to distribute this extra money to support businesses like nurseries - early year's settings, dry cleaners and garages as key sectors that had suffered through the pandemic. Once agreed, a formal proposal would need to go to EMT and Cabinet. Also, looking to build on the work that has been successful for the Council i.e. Month of Sundays, Festivals and town centre regeneration. Assessment is made against every idea against government guidance and the Council's objectives. Everything that is spent requires accountability, is data driven and evidence led with requires tangible outcomes.
- e. The Council were now in a position to offer 5 sustained business support schemes. The Council have partnered with the Federation of Small Businesses. This has already started, and the aim is to sign up 1000 small businesses and to give them access to a range of business support/guidance. Five other London Boroughs are now imitating the Enfield model.
- f. The Council are also in partnership with Enterprise Enfield on an e-business support programme to help businesses enhance their digital capabilities. This will help over 550 small businesses over the next 3 years.
- g. Through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding the Council proposes 3 new business support programmes. Two providers had already been chosen. The 3 programmes will serve:
  - scale ups (Business in the Community) – now engaged with 500 participants on this programme and hopefully creating many more ne businesses over the next 2 years.
  - start-ups (Business School) – to help 1000 new businesses over the next 2 years.
  - creative businesses (Business School) – Aiming to reach 500 business owners over the next 2 years.

### 2. Questions/Comments

- a. Referring to point 16 (bullet point 6) of the report regarding youth unemployment and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). This had started with 150 members already. 50 kickstart placements were proposed from the FSB membership. The Council were waiting for approval by the DWP and it would then be ready to use between the candidates and prospective employers. The Chair asked for data/figures regarding the cultural ratio/background of those young people as it was important that the Council are reaching those hard to reach communities.
- b. As regards the distribution of grant monies and complaints from businesses about this, it was advised that the distribution was challenging at the beginning of this process i.e. volume of activity, putting application scheme in place, staffing changes, businesses

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requiring the money quicker, etc. Over time these complaints had eased off and at present the Council were receiving very little in terms of complaints.

c. In terms of the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government) who require assurance from Local Authorities about the accounting of grant money provision, it was advised that this was in process now with the deadline being the end of September 2021. The Council must provide a sample of all the grants (£120M) it has paid so far to Central Government. The sample of grants paid to businesses from certain post codes in the borough with evidence of:

- Which businesses have been paid from these postcodes.
- What the assurance process was.
- What the application process was.
- What insolvency checks were made
- Were checks made for registration of these businesses in Enfield.
- Fraud checks with the fraud team.

All processes had been followed including running businesses through 'Spotlight', an online tool made available by Central Government to Enfield, before any monies were paid.

d. The Panel were pleased with the work officers had done providing financial support to businesses in Enfield as regards the management and implementation. However, there were concerns were raised that the policy of supporting businesses could have been developed before the Covid pandemic struck and there was more that could have been done outside of the Covid Environment. A further report was requested to include strategies for the following:

- The ending of furlough and the sectorial impact of that in Enfield. Residents will be impacted in different wards, who will those people be?
- Remote working – is here to stay and will have a dramatic impact. There will need to be a change to the working environment. Remote working helps certain family circumstances and working arrangements and is a sectorial impact.
- The Newables Board own workshops, they work with organisations that support converting offices into working locations. The Council have a seat on the shareholder group.
- Empty shops the Council has.
- Empty facilities that current landlords want to re-purpose.

The Council needs a strategy that addresses the above and it appears that this strategy can be implemented whether there is Covid or not. Officers need an understanding of this. Original ideas and how the Council plans this is required. A report is required that states what the issues are the Council are facing

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relating to Covid i.e. ending of Furlough and its impact, helping people with skills in some way and remote working.

The Council has potential building of homes near stations and have the ability to build workspaces and workplaces around those. The Council can engage and enable these which will rejuvenate its communities and high streets. The strategies should recognise Covid and state what the Council are doing as regards the above.

- e. Officers agreed to support all Councillors with the sharing of data/information on how businesses have been helped regarding grant payments, details of which businesses and in which wards. So, they can get an overview and visibility of this. Attendance by officers at Ward Forums would be a good opportunity for officers to provide feedback on what Council work has been done over the past 18 months and planned additional work i.e. LTN's, regeneration, etc.
- f. The Chair noted the Panel's concern about what the Council is doing about increasing footfall through Enfield Town and getting back to normality. Directly starting with the Council's workforce notwithstanding remote working.
- g. In reply to comments by the Panel regarding the grants system and how the panel could measure its success, officers clarified that they did have some information regarding this but was difficult to gauge what businesses would be doing with the grant and if it helped their business as officers could not necessarily ask business owners what they would do with the money. Where businesses had engaged with the team, they have said that they would like to contact them in the next 3 – 12 months to see if grants did have the impact they required and the long-term benefits. Officers did have some data on this and would take this away and look at what they can do.

### 3. Chair' Summary

- a. There would need to be 3-6 months further work on any additional report. The points raised would be considered in terms of reviewing the Panel's Work Programme and where feedback can be heard next year.
- b. With regards to point e. (above), making use of Council and those seeking information. This would need to be taken back in terms of how better communications can be done.
- c. Councillor Gunawardena to e-mail the Chair about any specific information that is required. Officers to also take this back regarding how they communicate particular projects within particular wards, who the Councillors are, what the projects are and how to feed this back at ward forums i.e. leaflets, etc. How quickly this will happen before Christmas is unknown as yet as there are still concerns by people gathering in large groups.
- d. The Chair noted the concerns about getting back to normality in terms of wards/surgeries.

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- e. The Chair thanks Bob Doyle, Sam Buckley and their team for their work and in report including their initiatives. Many businesses are grateful in the way the Council has conducted itself and able to keep them afloat through difficult times.

### **7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

NOTED the date of the next meeting:

- Tuesday 30 November 2021

Tuesday 30 November 2021

- Meridian Water Masterplan
- Planning Improvement Plan

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified.