

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 31 JANUARY 2023**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT (Chair) Margaret Greer, (Vice Chair) Bektas Ozer, Maria Alexandrou, Nawshad Ali, Elif Erbil, James Hockney, Mohammad Islam and Michael Rye OBE

ABSENT

STATUTORY CO-OPTES: *1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), vacancy (other faiths/denominations representative), vacancy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor representative) - Italics Denotes absence*

OFFICERS: Ian Davies (Chief Executive), Brett Leahy (Director, Planning and Growth), Shaun Rogan (Head of Corporate Strategy), Sarah Gilroy (Strategy and Policy Manager) and Marie Lowe (Governance and Scrutiny Officer)

Also Attending: Councillor Nesil Caliskan (Leader of the Council) Councillor Susan Erbil (Cabinet Member, Licensing, Planning & Regulatory Services) and Councillor Alessandro Georgiou

1

WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Committee **AGREED** with the Chair's proposal that the order of the items be changed. Item 5 - Planning Service Response Times would be taken as Item 4, followed by the Draft Council Plan 2023-26. PowerPoint Presentations would be made for both items, copies of which had been made available to the Committee and published on the Council's website.

No apologies for absence had been received.

2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 December 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

4

COUNCIL PLAN 2023-26

The Leader of the Council introduced the report which presented the draft Council Plan 2023-26: *Investing in Enfield*, together with a PowerPoint Presentation, which set out the Council Plan Framework, investing in Enfield, together with the priorities, principles and future outcomes to the Committee for discussion prior to approval of the final Plan by Council scheduled for February 2023.

The Head of Corporate Strategy explained that the new draft Council Plan 2023-26: *Investing in Enfield* set out the Council's strategic direction and priorities for the next three years. The plan set out five overarching priorities; five principles; and six future outcomes that the Council would be working towards. The Plan would be used to inform and guide staff across the organisation on the Council vision and priorities and would be available online for all the Council's stakeholders and partners to learn more about the Council and its goals.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Council Plan would provide staff with an understanding of their role within the organisation and the reasons for undertaking their duties and responsibilities. The Corporate Plan would be informed by the Annual Service Plans, which would be circulated to the Committee. New corporate performance scorecards for 2023/24 onwards in line with the priorities set out in the Plan were to be created, which would track the Council's performance and progress in delivering the five new priorities

ACTION: Governance

Responding to questions from the Committee, the Leader explained to enable an economy that worked for everyone, a swift economic response to the current economic climate which had been built into the Council Plan. There had been two fundamental steps to ensure this; the Council had made it a fundamental priority to reflect on the previous four years, reviewing the organisation, its capacity and reviewing its position four years ago. Regeneration programme, across the Borough, including homes, was very focused and the Administration were confident that it would deliver the five priorities. The Administration recognised that 'an economy that works for everyone' had a direct impact on the life chances and ability to get on in life of all the residents in the Borough. The Council could not do this alone and was exploring opportunities Pan-London and with local and regional partner organisations. Examples of the Greater London Authority and the private sector housing providers.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that the local Planning Service was very important to the whole community. Effective planning data was crucial to the economy and the Business Rates collected by the Council to generate income. The economic development of the five distinct town centres in the Borough was very important, with a focus on the strengths, together with funding to improve economical transport.

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The Leader and Chief Executive, responding to questions about the Lido listed in the manifesto pledges, advised that options had been identified with regards to the location, development of a business case and costs. The costs had been included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). In addition to this, a potential developer had been identified who wished to build in the Borough, however there was little more which could be shared at this stage due to the commercially sensitive information.

With regards to levelling-up, the Leader confirmed that the Council would bid on all available funding, which it was recognised that Enfield needed.

The Chief Executive advised that the North London Waste Authority, following a peer review, wanted to engage with the Council regarding Enfield's recycling rates. It was reported that Enfield's contamination rate was better than the industry average. The Council wanted to explore, in line with the Mayor of London, recycling rates for flats and housing estates.

With regard to the leisure provision in the Borough, the Chief Executive advised that the whole sector was finding it very challenging across the country. It was a very difficult situation all round. However, the Council would be looking at the wider context, not just provision at leisure centres but the use of other facilities around the Borough, including the use of indoor and outdoor facilities. This would be to provide wider access to sports facilities a range of activities.

Members expressed the view that the leisure offer to the residents was unsatisfactory and that many residents could not afford the subscription to private leisure providers and that a joined-up strategy across the Borough was essential for residents' health and wellbeing. This was linked to the active travel programme, where encouragement should be given to the use of bicycles on footpaths, or shared footpaths and in the parks. Walking and cycling were preventative measures to obesity and ill health and improved the health and wellbeing of residents. Access to leisure facilities was crucial to this.

The Leader confirmed that there would be a joint strategy for leisure, including safer travel, the role of private providers and schools and parks. The Chief Executive concurred and added it would be necessary to carry out a review to ascertain how residents would travel to and between parks and open spaces, together with, and investigation of, the quality and potential income of / from the provision of outdoor sports facilities. Good quality outdoor provision would offer outdoor sports opportunities. Another area to be reviewed under the leisure strategy were the disability offer, which were there but not well developed.

The Chair commented that the role and place of leisure in the Borough needed further consideration not just active travel.

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Referring to the possible use of the Vickers Lane Tennis courts by a Club, the Leader and the Chief Executive asked Councillor Alexandrou to contact them outside of the meeting to discuss.

The Leader and Chief Executive reassured Members that there was a plan to invest and improve the front of house facilities and provision, with regard to digital services and the website offer for those customers who found access difficult. It was recognised that there were a number of groups in the community who did not engage in this area and Digital Services at the Council were reviewing the website and its use and accessibility. Scrutiny Members would be asked to be involved in a working group to share their experiences.

ACTION: Digital Services

The Leader and Chief Executive both confirmed that it was essential that the Council involved young people in all decisions taken, and in particular in regard to those which have a direct impact all the young people in the Borough and on an individual basis. The Council must engage with the young people who were a focus for future investment. The Council was working to identify how the voices of the young people were heard and listened to.

A Member requested that consideration be given at the work planning meeting to the addition of school streets to the Committee's 2023/24 work programme and details of the project plan for the improvement to the Council's housing stock be circulated to the Committee.

ACTION: Governance/ Director of Housing and Regeneration

The Leader endorsed the view that Enfield's Scrutiny held the Administration to account and linked the work programmes to the Council Plan, Strategies and Policies, and that all staff at the Council should be able to identify which of the Council priorities their area of work related to and if unclear were to question this.

AGREED that the discussion and feedback of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Council Plan 2023-26: *Investing in Enfield* prior to approval of the final Plan by Council scheduled for February 2023 be noted and incorporated/forwarded to Council.

ACTION: Governance

5 PLANNING SERVICE RESPONSE TIMES

The Director, Planning and Growth's report and accompanying presentation on improving customer experience in planning and eliminating the planning applications backlog made at the meeting detailed the short-term plan to address the shortfall in the capacity of the planning applications service and set out the business case to improve Development Management in the Planning Department.

ACTION: Governance and Scrutiny Officer

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The Cabinet Member, Licensing, Planning and Regulatory Services emphasised the necessity and importance that the Planning Department changed in the way in which it worked presently and to make the appropriate changes. The plan would allow the Department to clear the current backlog of planning applications and to improve the professionalism and productivity of the Department for the benefit of residents, businesses, and Officers.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee, the Cabinet Member, Licensing, Planning and Regulatory Services confirmed that the recruitment of the additional Planning Officers had begun. There was already one person in post, with five positions to fill. Several applications for the positions had been received that week, with interviews planned. It was crucial to the implementation and success of the plan that the additional Planning Officers were recruited. On completion of the recruitment exercise, daily monitoring of the work of the Team and progress made would take place.

The Director, Planning and Growth acknowledged that Planning was a difficult to recruit area across the sector nationally. There were many challenges, not least the pandemic and economy. However, the Leader and Cabinet Member, together with senior management were alive to the risk should the recruitment exercise not be successful. The plan included a change in the culture and leadership of the Planning Service, which would be implemented immediately and would remain in place. Officers in the Planning Service wanted and needed to make the changes, which would give ownership and empowerment to Officer's with the provision of sustainable workloads. Officers had been seeking this resolution for some time, as the current situation did not allow room for them to exercise their professionalism and provide the service they wished to provide. The plan would also respond to customer needs and would hold the Council to account. There were many significant applications expected in the near future and the Council needed have the infrastructure, policies and procedures in place to deal with these effectively and professionally.

The Cabinet Member, Licensing, Planning and Regulatory Services confirmed that the Planning Service and Planning Officers were very positive and welcomed the proposal. They wanted to change and wanted to see the changes implemented.

The Committee welcomed the changes and expressed the view that it was important to involve councillors, who were aware of the current situation and, from queries received from residents the impact. At the end of the six-month period, it was imperative that the improvements continued. Members recognised that the improvements would allow additional and thorough checks to be in place and the identification and investigation of contraventions to planning approval and, where appropriate, allow enforcement action to be taken. The view was expressed that the backlog of the planning applications was the cause of the symptoms, which needed to be addressed.

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The Chair, on behalf Members requested that an update on the implementation of the changes be brought to the Committee and the work programme be noted.

ACTION: Director, Planning and Growth / Governance

AGREED that:

1. The next steps to hire six additional temporary planners for six months and create a Decision-Manager-level role to drive and embed process to increase productivity to remove the backlog of planning applications and to adopt a more effective and efficient form of working which met customers' needs in the Council's Planning Service be noted; and
2. An update report on the progress of the implementation of the plan be brought to the Committee at the appropriate time.

6

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

AGREED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be noted that the Fly Tipping item to be moved from the meeting of 9 March 2023 to a future meeting.

7

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED that the next business meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on **Thursday, 9 March 2023** at 7pm at the Civic Centre.