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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 5.8.2021

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 5 AUGUST 2021

### COUNCILLORS

**PRESENT** (Chair) Lee David-Sanders, Birsen Demirel, Mahmut Aksanoglu, James Hockney, Derek Levy, Doug Taylor and Hass Yusuf

**ABSENT** Susan Erbil, Margaret Greer and Elif Erbil, Mr Tony Murphy (Catholic Diocese Representative)

**OFFICERS:** Joanne Drew (Director of Housing & Regeneration), Amena Matin (Housing Development and Estate Regeneration Programme Manager), Bindi Nagra (Director of Health & Adult Social Care) Doug Wilson (Head of Strategy & Service Development) Claire Johnson (Head of Governance & Scrutiny (Superintendent Registrars), Koulla Panaretou (Mayoral Services Manager)

**Also Attending:** Cllr Gina Needs (Cabinet Member for Social Housing), Cllr Edward Smith (Conservative Group)

### 1

#### WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Margaret Greer, Cllr Susan Erbil, Cllr Elif Erbil. They were represented by Cllr Hass Yusuf and Cllr Doug Taylor.

Cllr Mahmut Aksanoglu put himself forward to Chair the meeting and this was seconded by Cllr Birsen Demirel.

Cllr Mahmut Aksanoglu welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

### 2

#### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest registered in respect of any items on the agenda.

### 3

#### CALL IN : DEVELOPMENT OF LAND FORMERLY KNOWN AS REARDON COURT

Cllr Edward Smith was welcomed as the Call-In lead and presented reasons for issuing the Call-in.

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The Call-in reasons and responses are detailed in the report where that:

- There had been a lack of consultations with the residents. It was viewed that if the concerns of the residents had been considered at the design stage, then the project would have progressed at the initial stages. The two main concerns identified by the residents were noise and parking issues.
- Since initial stages of discussions in 2016/17 and the demolition of Reardon Court in 2020, little has progressed with this project.
- Since the termination of the procurement and the withdrawal of the planning permission, the project is now at a standstill.
- The alternative approach - to bring in a partner, such as a Housing Association with specialised skills in this field should have been considered, they would have secured a grant and the Council would have been the client.
- In respect of the lets - the law required Housing Associations if in partnership with the Council to provide nominations to 100% of first lets and 75% of second lets.
- The question must be asked how we can deliver value for money whilst maintaining good standards.

The Chair thanked Cllr Smith and asked the Cabinet Member for Social Housing (Cllr Gina Needs) and officers to respond.

- Cllr Needs advised that Enfield have a duty to provide suitable, affordable care for our vulnerable elderly residents.
- The questions posed are understandable due to the time taken to progress the scheme.
- Residents' concerns in respect of parking and noise have been registered.
- Cllr Needs concluded that she supports this scheme and hopes other members do too.
- Joanne Drew (Director of Housing & Regeneration) advised that this scheme was initially led by the Adult Social Care team supported by Corporate property and funded by the general fund. Since 2020 and in compliance with GLA grant requirements the Housing Service is delivering the project as part of its 3500 council homes programme which is fully funded by the Housing Revenue account. It is important to note that the £30m allocation is capital and not available for use for day to day services.
- Bindi Nagra (Director of Health & Adult Social Care) advised that extensive consultations have taken place and formed part of the original planning application, during which time the aspect of parking did not come up.
- In terms of procurement, progress was limited as the Covid period only produced three bidders and only one was acceptable, although exclusions meant that a high degree of risk would be placed on the

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Councils side which was unacceptable to the Council at which point the procurement was abandoned.

- Amena Matin (Housing Development and Estate Regeneration Programme Manager) advised that the Council have a specialist project management team, who understand what homes are needed and where. At the demolition stage of Reardon Court, residents raised concerns about parking and noise and the Council listened and subsequently revised the scale of the scheme.
- New plans have included adding acoustic materials to the new build and this necessitated the need to revisit the planning application.
- Cabinet has agreed a registered providers framework for future schemes as appropriate. However, in the case of Reardon grant in the Councils name had already been secured.
- Cllr Doug Taylor asked for clarification on the original planning application in February 2020 where there was a deputation at the meeting and a revised planning application was required. He asked whether the reason for call in was more related to the planning decision rather than cabinet. In response, Bindi advised that the original scheme is being redesigned and is in the process of being re-consulted with the residents.
- Cllr Smith responded to say that the wrong scheme was initially submitted to planning for the 91 units and if consultations were completed, time would have been saved. Ameena responded to advise that the impact on the Cosgrove Close residents through the current consultation process has been considered in that the original scheme approved by the Planning Committee was being revised and will remain within the footprint of the building that was originally there.
- Cllr Derek Levy asked for clarity on the finance of the scheme. If the budget allowed £32m for 91 units then £30m for 69 units, the number of units has reduced by a significantly larger proportion than the projected budget requirement. A small reduction in budget will equate to a loss of 22 units. Also is there a contingency to the budget. In response, Cllr Needs advised that additional funding has been allocated in order to address the noise issues and other extras. Since Brexit, materials have been in short supply and prices have escalated causing cost estimates to go up considerably. Ameena further responded by advising the pandemic has impacted labour and materials and 20% projected increase in costs is a prudent cost assumption for the current market.
- Cllr Birsan Demirel advised that this was an exciting scheme to be proud of in the borough and sought clarity on the effect of covid and mitigation issues. In response Ameena reiterated that materials and labour costs have increased, and discussions are being held with the GLA in respect of grant funding to support the scheme. Cost of inflation has been factored into the pricing from 2% to 4%.
- Cllr Hass Yusuf advised that the project was robust and more care homes in the borough will be beneficial to our residents. Noise issues will only be from the initial construction of the site and concerns in relation to noise from the recycling centre next door will be minimal, fully endorsing the scheme.

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- Cllr James Hockney sought clarity on alternative options for spending the money on social care. In response Bindi/Doug advised that whether the Council fund and own the extra care scheme or go to the registered providers market to design, build and run the scheme, there is still a revenue cost implication. There is evidence that RPs building and running will cross subsidise accommodation costs by charging more for care and support costs. The cost of providing care and support does not reflect additional spend but funding used to purchase alternative types of support for people who might otherwise be placed in residential care, which costs more. This type of service promotes more independent living for older vulnerable people.
- Cllr James Hockney asked why an in-house team were not used for care services rather than using independent contractors. In response, it is more beneficial for the client (some of whom are very vulnerable) to separate the landlord and the care provider as if the same provider delivers both and the quality of care is not acceptable this can lead to disputes.
- To confirm the figures: £30m was the original cost, £27m is now the reduced cost for fewer units, 40% of which is grant funded, therefore the total amount of borrowing for the council is only £17.4m.

Cllr Edward Smith in summing up highlighted the following by claiming that:

- Project management of the scheme had not been handled effectively. Whilst going to planning twice, residents should have been adequately consulted. A huge cost increase must now be borne due the delays incurred.
- The Registered Providers and Housing Associations have been running similar successful schemes for many years for the elderly. This would be cheaper and better for the residents. If the Council had acted more efficiently from the outset, this issue would now be sorted.

Overview & Scrutiny considered the reasons for the call-in and the responses provided.

The Chair confirmed that having heard the reasons for call-in and the responses to call-in, the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would now be asked to vote. The options available to Members were:

- i) Confirm the original decision.
- ii) Refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member/Decision Maker for further consideration.
- iii) Refer to Full Council

Councillors Aksanoglu, Yusuf, Taylor, voted in favour of upholding the original Cabinet decision and Councillors David-Sanders and Hockney voted against. Cllr Derek Levy abstained. The original Cabinet decision was therefore agreed.

**4**  
**DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

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