

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2022**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Margaret Greer (Chair), Bektas Ozer, Maria Alexandrou, Nawshad Ali, Hannah Dyson, James Hockney and Mohammad Amirul Islam

ABSENT Elif Erbil and Michael Rye OBE

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: Joanne Drew (Acting Executive Director – Place), Peter George (Director of Development - Place), David Childs (Head of Strategic Development - Strategic Property Services), James Hall (Senior Development Surveyor - Place), Marie Lowe (Secretary)

Also Attending: Councillor Tim Leaver – Finance and Procurement Cabinet Member

Councillors Alessandro Georgiou, Tom O'Halloran
Press Representative

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WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Councillor Margaret Greer (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Elif Erbil and Michael Rye.

Councillor Hannah Dyson substituted for Councillor Michael Rye.

The Chair explained the purpose of the meeting was to review the decision of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement taken on 13 September 2022 regarding Key Decision 5271 - the Proposed Acquisition of Land and Buildings on Park Avenue, Potters Bar, EN6 5EW as a result of the matter having been called-in.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

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CALL-IN - KEY DECISION 5271 - THE PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF LAND AND BUILDINGS ON PARK AVENUE, POTTERS BAR, EN6 5EW

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report of Officers which detailed the call-in submitted in relation to the decision taken by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement regarding Key Decision 5271 - the Proposed Acquisition of Land and Buildings on Park Avenue, Potters Bar, EN6 5EW 2022).

Details of the decision taken and issued on 13 September 2022, had been included on Publication of Decision List No.17/22-23. The report also set out officer responses to the reasons for call-in.

The decision had been called-in for review by seven members of the Council: Councillors Lee Chamberlain (Lead), Alessandro Georgiou, Adrian Grumi, Paul Pratt, Ruby Sampson, Edward Smith and Andrew Thorp.

As the item contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person – including the authority holding that information) there would be further, confidential discussion when the meeting moved into the private part of the meeting.

The reasons for the call-in were presented by Councillor Lee Chamberlain as the Lead Member for the call-in.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement, responding to the reasons for call-in, stated that the rationale for the proposed acquisition was to protect and secure access to the Council's asset for a modest amount of money, which in light of the current economic climate and increasing interest rates was considered to be good value and prudent. The proposed purchase had been fully costed and risk assessed. Building development in the Borough of Enfield should be contained in its Local Plan and not be achieved by speculative developments.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement explained that the proposal was not to build on the green belt but to provide access to the Council's land to mitigate any risks should the land be included in Hertsmere Local Plan. Hertsmere Borough Council, with whom Enfield Council was working with, had called out for potential plots to be included in Hertsmere's Local Plan. The proposal would be considered by Full Council.

Enfield Council was focused on delivering homes to residents for their benefit and to meet the government targets to build the required number of homes every year.

Officers, in response to questions from Members, clarified that an out-of-date Local Plan would allow for more speculative development within the borough. This applied to all Local Authorities. Without a Local Plan, green belt sites were vulnerable to such speculative development which would contribute

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towards the government housing targets, which otherwise would not be met. Enfield Council was currently in discussion with Hertsmere Borough Council regarding both Local Plans and had a duty to cooperate.

In response to further questions from Members, Officers reiterated that there were insufficient brownfield sites both within the Borough and beyond, including Hertsmere Borough Council.

Officers went on to clarify that the decision was for the purchase of one single residential property, which, due to the width of the plot, would allow access to the Enfield Council land behind. Rental lettings would provide an income in the short term to help cover some of the finance costs.

Officers, stated categorically, that the decision was not purchase a green belt site nor to develop in the green belt. The land, which belonged to Enfield Council was a strip of land which ran parallel to the M25.

The Call-In Lead, Cllr Lee Chamberlain ~~Member~~ summarised the points made during the discussion as follows.

The value of the property, which was based on the open source, was modest, not speculative, good value and prudent. The proposal would protect the Council's asset. The proposed acquisition related to an individual residential property and not the purchase or development of a site in the green belt. However, he believed that the statements regarding the decision was not about the green belt were misleading and he was very concerned that the reasons were inexplicably tied to the decision made.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the reasons provided for the call-in and responses provided set out in the Officer's report. Having considered the verbal responses and information presented by the Cabinet Member, Finance and Procurement and Officers, the Committee **AGREED** to confirm the original decision made by the Cabinet Member, Finance and Procurement.

10 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED that the next business meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place at 7pm on 10 November 2022 in the Civic Centre, Enfield.

11 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The representative of the Press left the room when the Committee **AGREED** that the meeting be moved into Part Two at this point to facilitate discussion.

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RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items listed as part 2 on the agenda on the ground that they involve disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006).

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CALL-IN - KEY DECISION 5271 - THE PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF LAND AND BUILDINGS ON PARK AVENUE, POTTERS BAR, EN6 5EW

Following the Part Two discussion the confidential report and responses were **NOTED**.

The meeting moved into the public part of the meeting, where the representative of the Press returned to hear the summary of debate and the vote.