

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2023**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT (Chair) Margaret Greer, (Vice-Chair) Bektas Ozer, Maria Alexandrou, Nawshad Ali, Elif Erbil, James Hockney, Mohammad Islam, Michael Rye OBE and Ergin Erbil (Deputy Leader of the Council)

OFFICERS: Ian Davis (Chief Executive's Department), Dudu Sher-Arami (People Department), Heather Littler (Resources Department), Rachel Gibson (Resources Department), Simon Pollock (Resources Department), Harriet Potemkin (Head of Policy and Strategy), Sally Sanders (Head of Service Assessment), Karen Lucas (Head of Housing Management) and Tinu Olowe (Chief Executive's Department) and Robyn McLintock (Secretary)

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WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Ergin Erbil and Ian Davis.

A one minute silence was held for the victims of the Earthquakes across Turkey and Syria.

2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none received.

3

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2023 were AGREED.

NOTED the actions to be circulated to the committee.

4

**EQUALITIES WITH A FOCUS ON THE REDUCTION OF INEQUALITIES
ACROSS THE BOROUGH**

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 9.2.2023

Councillor Ergin Erbil, Deputy Leader of the Council introduced the item by thanking Officers for their hard work including the work of everyone on the Equalities Board.

Harriet Potemkin, Head of Policy and Strategy presented the report and summarised how the Council is meeting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and how it is delivering on the Councils equality and diversity policy.

Members noted that Enfield are going above statutory duties under the 2010 Equality Act. Fairer Enfield was developed during the pandemic which sets out work in the community and explains the expectations of the workforce.

In response to questions from Members, Officers confirmed a Children's Services specialist case worker is already in place and are taking referrals from primary care and GP's.

In response to comments from Members, the Deputy Leader and Chair of the Equalities Board explained the board brings together key stakeholders including father representatives, Age UK Enfield and LGBTQ+ representatives. The report highlights clear points on where a difference has been made and how inequalities have been tackled.

Officers noted the Members suggestion to make reports more transparent.

Members raised concerns on youth violence in the borough and the need to work more closely with key stakeholders. Officers explained a comprehensive report had gone to Crime Scrutiny Panel in December 2022, which is published on the website and available for all members to view, which details a programme of work which is address youth violence.

Following Members questions on food pantries, Officers explained that there are 2 local authority pantries in the Edmonton Library and Enfield Town Library. Users usually visit for a fixed period and are supported during this, including help with work opportunities. They are funded through council resources, the equalities fund and DWP housing fund.

Officers explained that they are tackling inequalities at GP services but working on the black health improvement project which involves training on an anti-racist approach. Work is also being done to make it easier for the homeless and gypsy community to access GP services.

ACTION: Invite Cllr Gina Needs Cabinet Member to a OSC meeting to discuss Community Safety and strategies being used to reduce youth violence.

IMPACT OF THE COST OF LIVING INCREASES ON RESIDENTS IN ENFIELD

Cheryl Headon (Head of Schools Traded Services), Sally Sanders (Head of Financial Assessment, Karen Lucas (Head of Housing Management) and Simon Pollock (Interim Director of Customer Experience) presented this item highlighting key points from the presentation.

Cllr Ergin Ebril highlighted that the cost of living crisis has had a worse impact on the residents of Enfield than Covid-19. Many residents are left unable to heat their homes or feed their children and this is unlikely to end any time soon.

Following a query from Members about the Household Support fund, the Officers explained they are awaiting confirmation for more information on funding. There is speculation that rather be given 6 monthly, it will be yearly. This will help to have proactive solutions rather than reactive.

In response to Members questions, Officers explained that the best way to prevent homelessness where possible is early intervention prevention. The cost of renting in the private sector in the borough is an issue and it will be some time before we see it go down steadily.

Officers explained that the community hubs allow them to find out what people's needs are, if necessary, they can then refer them onto the relevant areas of assistance.

Cllr Ergin Erbil explained that the Local Housing Allowance that the government sets as the maximum help with rent within housing benefit and Universal Credit is not rising which is contributing to the huge strain on private renters. He explained they are continuing to pose questions on this to central government.

Members commented that they compliment the Council on its response to the cost of living crisis.

In response to Member's query on the definition of an overcrowded home, Officers explained that the law has 2 definitions which include the number of people in a home, babies under 12 months are not accounted and children under 10 are counted as half. They also look at the number of bedrooms and living space available. The second looks at the size of the rooms. There is a trend of multi-generational families in properties due to cultural trends.

ACTION: Officers to provide a written response on how affective the £100k spent on bed blocking has been for getting people who are in hospital effectively discharged.

Following a question from Members, Officers clarified that they work closely with Citizens Advice and Job Centre Plus to discuss new ideas and new ways of doing things.

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In response to Members query, officers clarified that the council tax support hardship scheme is funded by Enfield. It usually costs around £450k a year, this year we will spend closer to £470k as the need has gone up. Next year around £600k will be allocated to the scheme. Cllr Ergin Ebril elaborated to explain that the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme changed for 23/24 is more equitable and schemes are being review to meet budget requirements.

In response to members questions on Council Tax, Business Rates and rent collection including short breaks in payments and extended payment dates, officers confirmed they have around 3500 people in temporary accommodation and around 10,000 in council homes. Officers work with tenants to help them to keep on track. There are around 5 residents per month who move into smaller housing which is more suitable for them as this results in lower rent and bills. They are not forced into a property which is too small for them, as an example someone who has been in a 4 bed home could be moved into a 2 bed home. A grant is provided to them and an Officer works with them to help them find a suitable property.

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2022-23 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

AGREED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be noted.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED that the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled on Thursday 9th March 2023.