

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 February 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Lynn Worrall (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Qaisar Abbas, Colin Churchman, Joycelyn Redsell and Terry Piccolo (substitute for James Halden)

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Apologies: Councillor James Halden

In attendance: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services
David Moore, Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery
Keith Andrews, Housing Development Manager
Chris Seman, Investment Planning & Performance Analyst
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

27. Minutes

The minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October 2019, 29 October 2019 and 14 January 2020 were approved as a correct record.

28. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

29. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Housing Development Options List

The Chair of the Committee Councillor Worrall explained that a number of questions had been put forward by residents and with this in mind, she was going to move that the item be heard first.

She continued to explain that due to the number of questions submitted, there was to be a time limit of 30 minutes; to ensure that as many questions were answered as possible. Should anyone not get to ask their question, Officers would provide a written response.

Question from Alexandru Andonie

Why were 2 sites Culver Fields and Callan Grove deemed suitable for development and put up for tender before the Housing Development Process was agreed?

The Housing Development Manager explained that preparatory work on these sites pre-dated the process agreed at January Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He continued by adding they had not been put out for tender for construction nor had any decision been made on development.

Question from Tricia Campbell

Have Thurrock Council ignored their priorities which resonates to "People" theme in particular "Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together" by not given its residents the power of opinion which involves living space?

The Housing Development Manager advised the Housing Overview and Scrutiny report and the Cabinet report started the process of communication. He continued by saying the report was clear there will be engagement with residents on a site by site basis. This would also be supplemented by the formal consultation process required should applications be submitted for planning approval.

Question from Wayne Joseph

What support packages are in place from Council to enable the local residents to manage their mental health after losing a peaceful tranquil environment?

The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery commented that the impact of any planning application on the local community would be considered as part of the planning process as individual sites are brought forward. This would include consultation with those responsible for the provision of Mental Health support, as appropriate.

Question from Councillor Shinnick

With 600 new homes already being built in Ockendon along with the 300 vans that were highlighted in Buckles lane that Ockendon has absorbed within its community without any additional schools, doctors dentists etc. What criteria was used to highlight the community spaces that are being used by the community to be built on.

The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery explained the criteria to identify a range of potential development sites was set out within the Cabinet report "Housing development process" presented on 15 January 2020.

The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery then addressed the Committee explaining at the 29 October 2019, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members had been asked to comment on the proposed process and criteria by which Council owned sites were selected for redevelopment for residential purposes. Subsequently, Cabinet had approved the approach set out, on 15 January 2020

He continued to outline that the report followed the criteria established by the Cabinet and set out a list of site options that were recommended to be considered for residential development by the Council (through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)) or by the Council's wholly owned company, Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL).

It was explained to Members that the report did not seek approval for individual housing development schemes, or for housing development contracts to be tendered. Members heard that one site had been included in error and that at the February Cabinet meeting the Portfolio Holder for Housing would be removing site 20 – Springhouse Road, Stanford Le Hope.

The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery stressed that any residents who were not able to attend the Committee to ask their question would receive a written response and a full consultation would be undertaken with complete engagement with residents as individual sites were brought forward.

Councillor Worrall enquired as to the due diligence given to the proposed 20 sites. The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery commented that a number of tests had been completed across all of the sites included on the options list. These could be tests completed either using a desk-based studies or actual testing of the land itself. He further commented that approved schemes were not in place for the sites on the options list at this time and that further work and studies as well as consultations would take place as or when individual sites were brought forward.

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Worrall stated she felt it would be best to review each site individually as per the recommendation to review and comment on the list of options.

Site 1 - Aveley Library/Hall/Car Park

Councillor Abbas queried as to where the new hall would be built. The Housing Development Manager stated no development had been undertaken as there was still work to be carried out, as the sites were still in the early stages. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that the new Aveley Hub was significantly bigger with a larger space. It was hoped that the hub would be used in place of the Aveley Hall.

Councillor Churchman echoed the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services commenting that the Aveley

Hub was due to be opened in the next few weeks and residents were looking forward to it.

Site 2 - Garron Lane/Humber Ave, South Ockendon

Councillor Baker remarked that the area proposed was causing residents stress, worry and panic. He stated that Officers should look at brown fill sites first before taking residents open spaces.

Sites 3/4 Enborne Green and Derry Avenue, South Ockendon

Councillor Baker commented that Derry Avenue had poor quality access. He followed up seeking how officers were planning to gain access to the site. The Housing Development Manager remarked there was work to be completed as to the quality of the land for all sites, there was also a range of criteria which was to be used.

The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery advised the report was a list of potential sites at an early stage and that schemes had not been developed for consultation yet and reiterated that the report was not seeking planning approval for the sites.

Site 5 - Culver Centre & Field

Councillor Abbas sought as to the consultation of the Culver Centre already being completed. The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery explained the initial work process for the Culver Centre was slightly different to the other sites, however was still in the early stages and still did not have any approved or finalised scheme. He added that residents had been in communication with the Council and Officers were preparing to go back out to consultation on the site and that this consultation would include feedback from the first consultation as well as amendments to the scheme resulting from the feedback.

It was commented that most of the proposed sites were located in South Ockendon. Members queried as to why there were no sites in the East of the Borough. It was explained it was difficult as a lot of the land was Green Belt land, Officers were looking at site options in conjunction with the Local Plan. This being said it was still possible for sites to be proposed at a future date.

Members sought as to the process of changing the use of the site, as it was previously used as a school and park. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services advised the Council had applied to change the use of the site to the Secretary of State and so the matter was with Central Government. The application was submitted in the autumn and Officers were chasing for a response.

Councillor Worrall enquired as to the mix on the site as to social and affordable housing. The Housing Development Manager advised that Council

policy stated 35% of all homes should be affordable housing. It was commented that homes built using the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) would be charged 70% of market rents.

Site 6 - Whiteacre, South Ockendon

Members remarked they felt this site was good for its proposed development. Councillor Baker stated this was the only site he agreed with. He continued to advise the site was an old NHS site.

Site 7 - Prince of Wales Public House, South Ockendon

The Chair stated that the Council owned this property. Councillor Redsell observed it was a shame that local pubs in the borough were being used for other uses as it meant community places were no longer available.

Sites 8/9 - Callan Grove and Broxburn Drive, South Ockendon

Councillor Churchman sought clarity on how residents could get the Callan Grove site pulled from the options list. The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery explained that the consultation process was still to be carried out and during the process would be discussions with residents on all possible sites.

It was confirmed during discussions that even sites that were Council owned, would still go through the Planning Committee as a matter of process and transparency. Officers further confirmed that the list of sites could be amended with sites being added or removed from the Options list at any time.

Members sought to whether infrastructure was to be included as part of the schemes, when developments were taking place. Examples of children attending schools outside of the borough were raised given that the sites proposed 404 new homes in South Ockendon alone.

Officers highlighted that the project was not part of the local plan and each site would be put through the planning process where it would be highlighted as to needs within each area. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services further stated that there would soon be the opening of the Integrated Medical Centres across the Borough.

Sites 10/11 Crammervill Street/Fleethall Grove and Darnley & Crown Road

Officers commented these sites had been identified under the HRA, although it was important to note that no decisions had been made for these sites to have homes built being funded by the HRA.

Councillor Redsell commented that the bulk of garages were not used for parking but more often than not for storage.

Sites 13, 14 and 15 Argent Street Thames Road and Manor Way

Councillor Worrall queried as to how Grays Beach car park was on the list. She continued by stating that residents used the car park and had merits to enable them to park. The Housing Development Manager commented a car parking survey would be completed and if it was agreed to process further scrutiny would be required.

The Committee queried how it was possible to list sites which were heavily used by residents.

Councillor Worrall continued on to site 15, she explained this site was known to residents as Elm Park; where the Council had recently planted 300 trees and homed protected species.

Site 16 - Bridge Road (East Side)

Members discussed how this site was the adult college and also a disused Scout hall. Officer stated that it did include the Scout hall and part of the car park to adult college. They confirmed that should the site be put forward for development, then conversations with the different users would be had.

Councillor Redsell commented the photo in the agenda showed that the site didn't look good, and she remarked that if redevelopment enhanced the area, then it could be a good thing.

Site 17 - 13 Loewen Road, Chadwell St Mary

Members discussed the poor condition of the building.

Site 20 - Springhouse Road, Corringham

The Chair commented that this site was to be removed by the Portfolio Holder.

Site 19 - Ridgewell Road, Orsett

Councillor Worrall stated this site had caused unrest for residents who owned their home, having bought them from the Council. She continued by remarking some residents found out over social media and were now living in uncertainty. The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery commented there was no scheme in place to develop on the site and any such scheme would be consulted on.

The Housing Tenant Representative sought if the homes on Malting Lane would be included as the road was on the boundary of the site. The Housing Development Manager commented that some of the homes on Maltings Lane could be included if the site was taken forward.

Councillor Worrall queried the split between social and affordable housing in relation to the 500 new homes to be built between 2019-2029. The Interim

Assistant Director Place Delivery advised the target of 500 homes had been agreed by Members and as yet the schemes for the sites were not sufficiently advanced to determine the mix of housing that would be built on each site.

The Chair continued to ask why Officers hadn't brought a longer list to the Committee to comment on. The Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery remarked he didn't recognise a "longer list" as the Council has information about sites all across the Borough. The sites included on the Housing Development Options List had been through some due diligence work and were at an early stage, with further work and consultation still needed in all cases. Other sites that weren't on the list had not had enough work completed to even consider bringing them forward for discussion at this stage, but if further sites were brought forward, then an update would be brought to Housing Overview and Scrutiny in due course to ensure Members were updated.

Councillor Worrall sought how Council owned land would be transferred to Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL) to ensure that a good value was achieved for the Council. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services stated that disposal of land would be recommended by Cabinet to be taken to Full Council as per a request of the General Services Committee.

Councillor Worrall requested that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee be kept up to date at every stage of the development.

Councillor Piccolo offered his thanks to the Portfolio Holder for presenting the report to Overview and Scrutiny so early on in the process and before any decision had been made.

The Chair of the Committee addressed Members of the Committee stating the HRA green spaces were owned by Thurrock residents and once they are gone they were gone. She stated the Committee could be confident that once building had started on the green spaces then a precedent would be set for more to be added to the list.

Councillor Worrall continued to state there were other sites that should be on the list, a long time before green open spaces, parks and people homes. She commented the Council would do well to listen to its residents and go back to the drawing board and look at the vision and priorities which were printed in all agendas. She remarked that with this in mind she could not endorse the list presented to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to review and comment on the list of housing development option sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.**

2. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note that their comments on this paper will be reported to Cabinet on 12 February 2020.

31. Housing Performance Update 2019/20

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services presented the report and in doing so, outlined the performance framework for the Housing Department and explained the context of the full range of indicators, which now included the Housing Performance Scorecard as performance measures. It was highlighted the report covered performance between April 2019 to November 2019.

The Investment Planning & Performance Analyst addressed Members explaining that for this municipal year to date there had been a significant improvement in overall tenant satisfaction with Housing services with 74.8% of the 1287 tenants surveyed rating the service as excellent or good. Members heard this equated to an improvement of 8.5% in comparison with the comparable period in 2018/2019.

He continued by highlighting the Key Performance Indicators for Housing Performance of which the following areas had reached or superseded the target of 75%; general satisfaction of tenants with neighbourhoods / services provided, rents collected and average time to turnaround / re-let voids; the latest turnaround of a void was completed in 19 days.

Councillor Redsell enquired as to whether Officers were on top of any rent arrears and queried if Housing Officers were working with Officers in the Council Tax Team. The Committee were advised that the number of evictions had decreased for the year and this was with the help of the Finance Inclusion Officers who were very proactive within the community.

The Housing Tenants Representative enquired as to whether any checks were undertaken before the voids were offered out to residents, as there were still repairs to be completed. Officers explained that any repair work on voids was managed by the voids team.

Members discussed Council Housing being offered to people moving into the borough. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that the Council Housing Policy was clear in that residents must have lived in the borough for 6 years, have a family link and have work within the Borough. Should this not be the case and Members knew of any cases where Housing had been offered to anyone moving into the area, then it should be reported to Officers as this was fraud and would be investigated.

Councillor Worrall queried what the percentage of complaints was in figures. Officers commented that complaints upheld remained on target and was consistent with upheld complaint levels in comparison with 2018/2019. It was

agreed that Officers would email the Committee with the complaint figures for the Housing Department.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes and comments on the report.

Councillor Worrall sought the Committees agreement to suspend standing orders; so that all business on the agenda could be discussed. This was agreed by the Committee.

32. Procurement of Housing Capital Programme Delivery

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services introduced the report informing Members that it set out the proposals for the procurement and contract packages to ensure the successful delivery of the Housing Capital Programme.

He further explained the key priorities for the Housing Capital Programme for next 5 years, was the continuation of the property refurbishment through the Transforming Homes programme and the external refurbishment of nine tower blocks in Grays.

Members heard how the refurbishment of kitchen and bathrooms of Council homes was near to completion. Following this the Council was due to go out to tender for the external refurbishment of tower blocks cladding and windows.

The Chair of the Committee sought as to the type of tender the Council were to complete. It was confirmed that an open procurement exercise would be undertaken, where a number of contractors would be able to apply.

Councillor Worrall further asked how Officers were planning to get the best deal possible when it came to costs for completing the works. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director of Children's Services commented the Councils existing contractors had a very extensive social value offer for example apprenticeships and working with local schools. He continued by confirming this would continue with the new contract. Councillor Worrall welcomed this and stated that it was the Social Value Programme who cleaned the War Memorials in the borough.

It was remarked by Councillor Redsell that the tower blocks in Blackshots Ward were built in the late 1950s/1960s and it was not just external refurbishment that was needed; she commented the flats had mould issues due to condensation.

RESOLVED the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Members were requested to note and comment upon:

1. The procurement of two major works contract packages for the delivery of the Housing Capital work programme as set out in the report
2. The procurement of two contract packages to provide strategic support and cost management of the Housing Capital Programme as set out in the report
3. Authority being delegated for the awarding of the above contracts to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

33. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2019/2020

The Committee discussed the work programme ahead of the new municipal year. Members agreed to a number of reports being included on the Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed for the following reports to be included on the Work Programme for 2020/2021

- **Housing Strategy Update**
- **Social Value Framework**
- **Housing Development Update**

The meeting finished at 9.20 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk