

9 December 2015		ITEM: 9.1
Cabinet		
Call-In to Cabinet Decision 01104415 – Housing Estate Regeneration		
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lynn Worrall - Cabinet Member for Housing		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Accountable Head of Service: Kathryn Adedeji, Head of Housing, Investment and Development		
Accountable Director: David Bull, Interim Director of Housing		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This report outlines the background to the call-in that Councillors Ojetola, Coxshall and Halden made to a Cabinet decision regarding the Housing Estate Regeneration. It also outlines the discussion and decision the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee made at their committee held on the 30th November 2015, which considered the call-in.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Cabinet note that the call-in was rejected.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 On Wednesday 14th October 2014, Councillors Ojetola, Coxshall and Halden called in the recommendations of the Cabinet report 'Housing Estate Regeneration' (decision 01104415), in their capacity as three non-executive Members.

2.2 Details of the recommendations called-in are provided below:

Recommendation 1.1

Cabinet not to award decant status to three Grays high rises – Butler, Davall and Greenwood House, but instead to note that continued consultation should take place with residents to include detailed design on alternative home provision to ensure residents are given a clear unambiguous set of choices.

Recommendation 1.2

Cabinet to agree that officers consider feedback from this consultation as part of the development of the emerging master plan for Grays Town Centre.

Recommendation 1.3

Cabinet to note that the Council's new build development on Seabrooke Rise will be allocated in accordance to the Council's existing Lettings Policy and existing residents of the Seabrooke Rise high rise towers will not benefit from enhanced priority status at the current time, therefore Council explores a local lettings plan as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 1.4

Cabinet to note that the Council is currently reviewing the proposed Housing Development Plan and Estate Regeneration Programme in the light of the Government's imposed reductions in rent. The Council are assessing the implications and options available to ensure that the financial parameters of the HRA are met, whilst retaining an affordable and deliverable programme of housing investment and new build development.

- 2.3 The reason for making the call in (in accordance with Chapter 4, Part 3, Rule 10.4 (f) of the Constitution) has been cited as a failure of the decision maker to take the decision and an alternative proposal was suggested:

"The flats are not sustainable and do not represent 21st Century Britain, a clear strategy needs to be in place that sets out the flats can be brought up to decent homes standard or if they cannot a viable alternative option, such as demolition. No clear aims/strategy or plan for implementation is currently in place to provide better homes, which should also include the investigation that the flats need to be brought down to provide much better homes for Thurrock residents."

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 On 30th November 2015, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the call-in. Councillor Ojetola introduced his call-in stating that the Cabinet decision failed to take into account how the Council would find £6 million to maintain the tower blocks at 'decent home' standard. He also questioned why the council was proposing to undertake more consultation if the majority of residents already expressed a view to regenerate the area.
- 3.2 Councillor Worrall, the portfolio holder for housing, outlined her reasoning for proposing the original decision stating that the consultation sat within the wider work of the south Grays masterplan and it was clear that residents had requested more information on what future regeneration would look like before they gave a final opinion on the future of the tower blocks. Therefore more consultation was required. Councillor Worrall added that 40% of residents did not want to see the tower blocks go and this was a significant amount of

people for the Council to take note. The consultation had been of good quality and there would be no funding gap as the improvements to the flats had already been factored into the Transforming Homes Programme. Those residents wishing to move away from the tower blocks had the opportunity to move to a new development nearby called The Echoes.

3.3 Three residents who had previously spoken at the Cabinet meeting were invited to make further representations and each took this opportunity, some in favour of keeping the tower blocks and some keen to start regeneration. The details of these representations will be set out in the committee minutes. Those that spoke were:

- Ms Rachel Low
- Mr Gerry Calder
- Ms Marian Harries

3.4 The Committee discussed the lifespan of the tower blocks and some felt there should not have been a consultation if there were still decades of longevity left in the tower blocks. Officers clarified the use of a thirty year appraisal was not a comment on the lifespan of the blocks but for the purpose of measuring financial costs of demolition verses maintaining the flats to decent homes standard.

3.5 Councillor Snell, as Group Leader for UKIP, was given the opportunity to speak during the meeting and stated that there had been plenty of opportunity for Conservatives or other councillors to ask questions at the Cabinet meeting in October. He felt there was a win-win situation as those who wanted to stay could and those residents that wished to leave the blocks had the opportunity to move to The Echoes.

3.6 Councillor Ojetola summarised that he simply wanted long term certainty for the residents.

3.7 The Committee voted in favour to reject the call-in with four votes to two with the prevailing viewpoint that Cabinet had made a sound decision with the information available at its October meeting.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The Committee are requested to manage the call-in in accordance with the provisions set out in Chapter 4, Part 3 of the Constitution.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The call-in has a positive impact on corporate policies as it allows for the proper exercise of the democratic function, namely for Members to call-in a Cabinet decision based on valid arguments.
- 6.2 The role of Overview and Scrutiny in this function will allow for issues to be discussed in a public arena with cross party involvement and will give the opportunity for interested parties to join the debate and make representations. understanding the needs of the most vulnerable.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Chief Accountant, Corporate Finance

- 7.1.1 The medium to long term financial implications of any project undertaken for housing development or estate regeneration will be, and are considered as, part of both the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the HRA business plan which evaluates both the financial viability and affordability of the schemes incorporating both Capital and Revenue implications with regards to funding and additional revenues generated.
- 7.1.2 Work is ongoing to ensure the viability of the estate regeneration proposals as they are developed within the HRA Business Plan and a further report on the financial implications and the HRA Business Plan will be made to Cabinet in November 2015, including the impact of the government's budget announcements on 8th July 2015.
- 7.1.3 Further reports to Members will be presented on the affordability position of the housing development and regeneration plans on conclusion of the feasibility and affordability studies outlined above. We will also seek approval from Cabinet on the proposed delivery mechanisms and any changes to the required HRA expenditure and business plan as a result of these programmes.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Monitoring Officer

The Call in on this Cabinet decision was submitted within the set time limits under grounds 10.4 (a) (Due regard for individuals and communities served by Thurrock Borough Council); ground 10.4 (g) (Consistent with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework) and following advice the additional ground 10.4 (f) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes.

Following advice from the Monitoring Officer the Chief Executive pursuant to Rule 10.11 deemed the Call in valid under the additional amended ground of 10.4(f) (Clarity of aims and outcomes) but not grounds 10. 4 (a) and (g) as these had not been met.

Ground 10.4 (f) was met and deemed valid as a Call in under this ground could contribute to further clarity of a complex issue and decision.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

Regeneration of the Council's housing estates will have positive impact on the availability of high quality affordable housing in Thurrock, including for vulnerable groups and will be developed through a process of consultation and engagement with all residents and the local community in order to inform a full equality impact assessment prior to any works being commissioned. Regeneration objectives include not only high quality housing but also holistic objectives around health and wellbeing, improving education and job creation and improving economic prosperity. Contractors and developer partners will be required to have relevant policies on equal opportunities, be able to demonstrate commitment to equality and diversity and to supporting local labour initiatives that achieve additional social value.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

- None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Call-in form

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