



Economic Regeneration, Housing and the Arts Policy and Accountability Committee

Agenda

Tuesday 3 March 2015

7.00 pm

Small Hall - Hammersmith Town Hall

MEMBERSHIP

Administration:	Opposition
Councillor Ben Coleman (Chair) Councillor Daryl Brown Councillor Adam Connell	Councillor Marcus Ginn Councillor Lucy Ivimy

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Date Issued: 20 February 2015

Economic Regeneration, Housing and the Arts Policy and Accountability Committee

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** If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a particular item, whether or not it is entered in the Authority's register of interests, or any other significant interest which they consider should be declared in the public interest, they should declare the existence and, unless it is a sensitive interest as defined in the Member Code of Conduct, the nature of the interest at the commencement of the consideration of that item or as soon as it becomes apparent.*

At meetings where members of the public are allowed to be in attendance and speak, any Councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest or other significant interest may also make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter. The Councillor must then withdraw immediately from the meeting before the matter is discussed and any vote taken.

Where Members of the public are not allowed to be in attendance and speak, then the Councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest should withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is under consideration. Councillors who have declared other significant interests should also withdraw from the meeting if they consider their continued participation in the matter would not be reasonable in the circumstances and may give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest.

Councillors are not obliged to withdraw from the meeting where a dispensation to that effect has been obtained from the Audit, Pensions and Standards Committee.



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Economic Regeneration, Housing & the Arts Policy Accountability Committee

Minutes

Thursday 29 January 2015

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Ben Coleman (Chair), Daryl Brown, Adam Connell and Marcus Ginn.

Community: 65 residents, businesses and community organisations.

Other councillors: Stephen Cowan (Leader of the Council), Sue Fennimore (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion), Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Residents Services), Lisa Homan (Cabinet Member for Housing), Andrew Jones (Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration), Vivienne Lukey (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care) and Max Schmid (Cabinet Member for Finance).

Officers in support: Fern Aldous (Assistant Committee Coordinator), Nicki Burgess (Business Engagement Officer), Mike Clarke (Director of Libraries and Archives), Kathleen Corbett (Director of Finance and Resources), Kim Dero (Head of Economic Development Learning and Skills), Mike England (Director of Housing), Antonia Hollingsworth (Principal Business Investment Officer), Ibrahim Ibrahim (Assistant Committee Coordinator), Hitesh Jolapara (Bi-Borough Director of Finance), Maureen McDonald-Khan (Director of Building and Property Management), Poonam Patel (Committee Coordinator) and Colin Thomas (Area Manager Pinnacle PSG).

36. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Councillor Coleman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that about an hour would be allocated to items 4, 5, and 6 and there would be a short break between each item.

The Chair said the next meeting of the committee would focus on the Arts and would be held on Tuesday 3 March 2015 and not Tuesday 17 February 2015. A resident noted this might clash with the Sheltered Housing Forum on that day.

The Chair also announced that a Tenants' Conference 2015, *Moving Forward Together*, would take place on Saturday 7 March 2015, Novotel London West, 1 Shortlands, London W6 8DR from 9.15am to 4pm. Anyone interested, should contact Daniel Miller on 020 8753 6652 or email Getinvolved@lbhf.gov.uk.

37. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lucy Ivimy.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

39. CORRECTIONS TO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes were approved as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair.

40. BETTER HOUSING FOR DISABLED RESIDENTS

The Chair said that the aim of this discussion was to inform the delivery of the Administration' manifesto commitment:

“People with learning and other disabilities, and the family members who care for them, need decent homes. We will consult with users and other stakeholders to ensure that we are able to put in place the most modern, appropriate supported housing for disabled people”.

He said that the recommendations from this meeting would feed into the council's current housing strategy consultation.

Victoria Brignell, a trustee of Action on Disability, set out a number of concerns:

- Lifetime tenancies made it hard for disabled people to downsize their flats to suit their changing needs.
- It was wasteful to pass on adapted properties to non-disabled people.
- The register of accessible housing in the private as well as social housing sector needed to be kept up to date.
- The council should take the opportunities for multi-disciplinary working offered by the Care Act 2014 together with the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
- An assessment should be made of the cost of providing all the accessible housing needed in the borough.

Kamran Mallick, CEO of Action on Disability, endorsed these comments and added:

- Housing was the cornerstone of independence.
- The forms to complete and other aspects of the current system were inaccessible to individuals with a range of impairments. As a result, many felt that they had no hope and could not see how they could be truly independent.
- It was hard for disabled residents when they had to be placed out of the borough and away from friends and family due to a lack of suitable housing in the borough.
- Over the past ten years, Action on Disability had worked with Mike England's team in Housing Options to try and improve the quality of data on the Council's register about housing that was affordable and accessible but more work was needed.

A Town ward resident who uses a wheelchair said her Notting Hill Housing Trust flat was not accessible as it had steps where it was not possible to install a ramp and the doorway was too narrow for a wheelchair. She had to dismantle her wheelchair every time she wanted to leave the property just to do simple things like food shopping. The flat was not adapted to her needs and her upstairs neighbour's behaviour towards her was often intimidating.

She was on the housing re-allocation list and was offered just one alternative property before discovering she had been dropped from the list. She said she would be willing to move out of the borough if it meant moving into an adapted/accessible property that would improve her quality of life and independence.

A Healthwatch representative was concerned that the council was not adapting properties within a reasonable timeframe after being assessed. They gave the example of a tenant who had had their home assessed for necessary adaptations before moving in. As these were not done in time, a retro-fit was required, which added expense and inconvenience.

Julian Hillman, Chair of Trustees at H&F Mencap, thanked the Chair for allowing Mencap to represent its concerns in person. He said housing in the borough was failing to meet disabled people's needs in four areas, which he called the "four A's": Application, Assessment, Allocation and Attitudes. He referred to a circulated paper and explained that the following speakers would address its points in turn. [The relevant statements from the paper are set out below in italics.]

Mencap began its "Can we live here too?" campaign because people with learning disabilities of all ages and their families felt ignored by the system. There is a lack of understanding and a lack of coordination between Housing and Social Services. Society assumes a caring approach to disability and the housing system often seems uncaring, unaware and even brutal. There is a spectrum of need from parents caring for younger children, through to providing for adults who can no

longer live at home, to thinking about middle aged people living with pensioner parents.

Amanda Roles of Parentsactive agreed that the application system was not disability friendly and said she would welcome a strategy to improve it. This should take account of the needs of disabled children and their families. She also said the council needed to join up its support for disabled people – for example, the council’s discussion paper prepared for the meeting did not mention joint working between the council’s housing team and disabled children’s team. As regards allocations, the worst requirement was that families must be two bedrooms short before they could be considered for housing.

There is a need for assessment criteria which recognise disability in all its forms. The application processes and medical forms must do the same and there is a need for closer working with Council professionals.

Dominika Michali, Early Support Programme Coordinator, H&F Key Working Service, said housing staff needed a better understanding of children with learning disabilities: the council should take a holistic approach. For example, in Hillingdon, housing officers attended “team around the child” meetings. She commended Genesis Housing Association for having a good understanding of children with learning disabilities and for making suitable adaptations, e.g. to the size of bathrooms.

Lack of appropriate housing has a terrible impact on some families. There is no understanding of the pressures on families - individual bedrooms, bathing needs etc. Families worked hard to get the right special school place and then when emergency housing is needed this is ignored.

A trustee of Action on Disability said there should be more in-borough residential facilities in place for disabled young people. She had located a suitable school for her son but this involved travelling up to five hours to get there. With earlier planning, this could have been avoided.

It is not appropriate for many young adults to stay with their parents and the Council needs to keep young people local and provide suitable housing. There needs to be planning. Currently the system waits for homelessness rather than planning local accommodation.

A Parentsactive member said the council’s approach seemed disjointed. For example, “affordable” accommodation was unaffordable. Councillor Andrew Jones, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration, said he understood that point of view. The council was working to deliver genuinely affordable housing through Section 106 and other agreements with developers.

1. Given that much of the future housing stock available to Learning Disabled tenants will be from housing associations, will personal budgets keep pace with rents at 80% of market rate?

2. *There are large regeneration areas within Hammersmith and Fulham which have the potential to provide 40% affordable housing subject to viability. Of these how many are designated for vulnerable groups such as the learning disabled?*

3. *The previous LD housing strategy, has it provided any new hew homes and does it meet need?*

4. *Is the evidence base from the LBHF Supporting People 2013-14 a true reflection of need within the borough going forward for the next 5 years?*

A tenants' representative said they worked with adults with a learning disability who lived in the borough and with Safety Net People First, a self-advocacy project in the borough that supported adults with learning disabilities to speak up. Following a series of meetings and consultations with service users with learning disability across the borough, their main concerns focused on choice, location and support. For example

- There was a lack of choice in the type of accommodation offered and a lack of understanding that disabled people may need to change their accommodation if it becomes unsuitable as their condition changes over time.
- There was a general fear of being moved out of the borough. People wanted to live near to their families and friends. They also wanted to live in shared accommodation with people of a similar age and the right mix of personalities.
- Support should be offered that was appropriate to individual service user's needs. It should give them the skills they required to be active and independent tenants. Regular visits from the Council or the relevant housing associations would make people feel more supported.

A council tenant with learning disabilities said they had been assaulted twice by their neighbour and felt scared for their safety. The council's housing department had not treated them well. They had been allocated a property with steps, even though they had mobility problems. They had been told they would be rehoused only once their condition got worse and had been removed from the housing register.

The Chair thanked the tenant for speaking up and said that, although he appreciated they had raised larger issues for the council to address, their particular case would be taken up.

A housing association tenant with learning disabilities was experiencing problems with their neighbour, who had young children who screamed from 7am to 7pm every day. This meant they could not watch their TV and if they raised the volume, the children would scream louder. Notting Hill Housing Trust had been told about this but done nothing to help. The tenant wanted someone to visit their flat to hear the noise for themselves and resolve the issue.

Councillor Sue Fennimore, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, offered to take this case up.

There is not sufficient support for existing tenants with learning disabilities both in the Council and amongst Housing Associations. Bullying/hate crime is an issue.

The parent of a disabled adult said that 40 per cent of adults with a learning disability were still being looked after by their families and 21 per cent were over 60 years old. This put a terrible strain on their parents as carers did not stop caring when their children got older. The new administration's approach seemed to be going in the right direction and was more moral and ethical but what further support would older carers receive to ensure they were able to have some space and life for themselves? And what could be done to ensure that their children would still be supported if a crisis occurred?

With the recent changes, people with learning disabilities whose only hope of a home was with the Council got kicked off the register. Older carers with middle aged sons or daughters may have opted to care, assuming that sooner or later accommodation would be offered before their health makes this impossible.

Mike England, Director of Housing Options, Skills and Economic Development, responded as follows:

- The Council would look into flexibility around lifetime tenancy agreements as part of the housing consultation.
- His officers were working to make the process of getting on the housing register more disability friendly. The council would be road testing new applications forms with Mencap and Action on Disability in March.
- More needed to be done ensure that existing properties were suitable for disabled residents.
- More also needed to be done to improve the accuracy of data covering disabled residents, carers of disabled adults and adaptations.
- He agreed that better coordination was required between the council's Housing, Social Services and Children's Services departments.

Lisa Homan, Cabinet Member for Housing, said the Council would be following up on the needs of disabled housing association tenants with the Housing Association Forum. She asked all residents to respond to the housing consultation to help shape the housing service they wanted. In response, a resident said they had submitted a suggestion online that the figures published in the draft strategy needed serious review.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted and that the discussion be submitted as a formal response to the council's housing strategy consultation.

The Chair announced a ten-minute break before the next item.

41. **BRINGING EMPTY SHOPS BACK INTO USE**

The discussion opened with presentations by Elisicia Moore, founder of the Petit Miracle Hub, and Nick Russell, chief executive of We Are Pop-Up.

Elisicia Moore of the Petit Miracle Hub explained that Petit Miracle was a registered social enterprise that ran a business incubator/retail unit on the first floor of the West 12 shopping centre in Shepherd's Bush. This enabled aspiring entrepreneurs from Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster to rent affordable retail space from £35 pw to showcase their products and test the market without significant financial investment.

The rent covered business rates, utilities, service charge, concierge service and peer support. The window display showcased a different business each month. Positive relationships with Land Securities, who owned the W12 centre, and other corporate partners offered broader networking opportunities. The hub also offered tenants shared meeting space and business support from experts, and it provided a community space for local people.

Elisicia said that she had previously gained a £1,000 investment from a Highjack Your High Street competition to help set-up a small pop-up shop. Although this had failed, she had learnt to embrace the failure and turn it into success.

Nick Russell of We Are Pop-Up explained that his was an online business that offered legitimate contracts between landlords and tenants seeking premises for short-term lets, eg for retail, art, design or socially beneficial projects. The Petit Miracle Hub was an excellent example of the benefits that pop-ups could offer.

Nick's team built close business relationships with landlords and tenants. Ten per cent of rentals had developed into a long-term contract. Small businesses welcomed the opportunity of securing a short-term lease and occupying a regular location for weeks or months intermittently throughout the year before identifying a long-term location.

Nick said the company had grown gradually, moving from completing online transactions within 30 days to doing so within 15 minutes. It worked hard to keep up with the rapid shift in supply and demand in this area of retail estate. It used social media to promote itself and was currently growing internationally, making connections in France and Italy.

We Are Pop-Up had worked with Camden council and a number of other public sector organisations. Nick felt this has shown that it was just as difficult for small business owners to work with local authorities as with the private sector. There were many public sector barriers for entrepreneurs.

Discussion

A resident suggested that the council offer its empty premises for pop-ups and start-ups. The council explained it was carrying out a stock review of all its properties, including community assets. It currently only had four units empty and these were undergoing repairs, under offer or being marketed. Officers were also in discussions about placing pop-ups in council-owned premises in the shopping parade on Bloemfontein Road.

It was noted that a major difficulty lay in identifying the landlords of empty shops and then motivating them to let the premises be used for pop ups or on a short-term basis. It was difficult to work with commercial letting agents such as those in King Street Mall, as they would always wait for a tenant who wanted a longer lease.

It was felt it would be useful to establish an empty shops database for the borough, with the public helping to collecting data. It was suggested that the council develop a "Report It" app for reporting empty shops along the lines of its existing app for reporting litter problems. It was agreed that if anyone came across an empty shop, they should send details to Nicki.Burgess@lbhf.gov.uk.

It was also suggested that it would be useful to identify the designated planning use of available premises, eg A1 retail or A3 restaurant.

The council's business support service was asked to provide more help to new business start-ups.

A resident suggested that the council offer business rate relief to encourage landlords to consider pop-ups. It was explained that the council still had to pay the full rates to central government so this could be expensive. However, options for doing so were currently under review.

Another resident suggested that additional financial penalties should be levied on those leaving empty shop units vacant for more than three months. Landlords currently got business rate relief for the first three months a property was empty, after which they had to pay full business rates. Given the number of empty retail units, this did not seem to be an adequate incentive for some landlords to find new tenants.

It was proposed that section 106 funds from developers be used to support initiatives to bring empty shops back into use.

The council was urged to consider a marketing strategy to support those establishing a pop-up shop in the borough. The lack of physical marketing material, such as digital noticeboards, was a real concern for those struggling to build their brand.

It was noted that 10,000 people had visited the North End Road traffic-free Festive Market on 6 December 2014. The same communication platforms should be used for other council promotions. Just as with Shepherds Bush

Market and Portobello Road Market, it was important to establish a specific brand for any new regular market in the borough. Anyone interested in having a stall in a future traffic-free market was invited to contact Nicki.Burgess@lbhf.gov.uk.

As setting up new retail spaces was an opportunity to bring the local community together, it was hoped that this would remain the case in the future.

Residents wanted to know what could be done to reinstate the community spaces lost under the previous administration.

A social enterprise called "Soup for Lunch" gave the elderly the opportunity to be part of a community and helped to rejuvenate small open gardens/green spaces. It was important to do everything possible to protect the borough's history and heritage and restore community cohesion.

Elisicia Moore said that people could use the Petit Miracle Hub for meetings. A small donation would be required as the staff would be volunteering their time. Contact Elisicia@petitmiracles.org.uk.

RESOLVED –

To set up an Empty Shops Action Group of residents, businesses and the council.

People were asked to contact Nicki.Burgess@lbhf.gov.uk if they wanted to be part of the action group. Elisicia Moore kindly volunteered Petit Miracles as the venue for the first meeting.

Ben Coleman encouraged people to respond by 20 February to the current consultation on the draft Local Plan, which touched on everything that had been discussed. This could be accessed online or by emailing localplan@lbhf.gov.uk.

Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council, looked forward to working with everyone in getting the borough where it needed to be.

42. BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2015/16

Hitesh Jolapara, Bi-Borough Director of Finance, presented the 2015/16 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy. He referred to the headline figures in a circulated presentation (see Appendix B of the minutes).

Presentations covering the Housing and Library Services were also circulated (see Appendices C and D of the minutes).

Question and answer

A resident asked if the figures equated to a 1 per cent reduction in Council Tax. The Chair said they did.

The resident then asked what specific changes had been made to the Housing budget. Kathleen Corbett (Director of Finance and Resources), referred to pages 22-24 of the report and said that savings had been achieved without incurring any significant change in the delivery of service. For example, £500,000 had been saved on temporary accommodation because Housing had kept down the use and therefore cost of B&Bs, and £200,000 would be saved by reducing the bad debt provision for temporary accommodation as officers were doing a good job in collecting rents.

A resident asked how many people were still in B&Bs and temporary accommodation. Mike England said seven families were in B&Bs and 1,200 people were in temporary accommodation.

Councillor Ginn referred to page 23 of the report and asked if there was an impact following the drawdown of £54,000 Section 106 funding for The One Place team. Kathleen Corbett said it was expected that Section 106 funding would continue to be found for this in the future.

Councillor Connell thanked Officers for reducing the number of families in B&B accommodation and asked if the B&B projections for future years in the budget report were a result of the government's welfare reform. Mike England said that the figures assumed a gradual impact from welfare reform and were prudential assumptions that would be reviewed as the year progressed.

Library Services

Mike Clarke, Tri-borough Director of Libraries and Archives, referred to page 26 of the report and the circulated presentation.

He said that 5 per cent (£162,000) savings for 2015/16 would be achieved from changes to contracts, more savings from procurement and improvements to processes: for example, by reducing the cost of transporting books between libraries and from a shared computer system. The approach taken was to make savings without affecting the library services on offer.

Question and answer

A resident highlighted the importance of supporting children's literacy and said that charging children for overdue books was not helpful. In addition, why were charges for printing and photocopying higher than on the high street? Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Residents Services, said that the new administration was reducing or removing many library charges. The charge for overdue books for children had already been removed. Photocopying charges would be reduced to the previous level before the price increase in October.

Councillor Connell asked about the cost of books. Mike said the shift to e-books had reduced some costs.

Councillor Ginn asked what the demand flow was. How many people were using the libraries? Mike said that more were people using the Fulham and Shepherds Bush libraries and the overall position was that libraries were well used.

Councillor Ginn also asked how the demand for books was being met. Mike said that the shared library service within the tri-borough arrangement helped as customers could now choose from more than a million books across the three boroughs.

A resident asked how libraries were engaging with schools to address literacy concerns. Mike said that positive engagement was in place between schools and libraries. For example, in 2014, 725 children – twice as many as the previous year – had taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge, a national reading scheme to keep primary age children active readers during the long summer holiday.

A resident suggested that Libraries should be a future item for the committee to discuss. The Chair said the Arts would be the main theme for the next meeting and libraries might come up then but they could also be looked at separately at a future meeting.

A resident asked how much of a saving was made from selling the Sands End Library. Mike Clarke and Hitesh Jolapara confirmed that the figures would be included in the minutes, as the sale of the library had occurred prior to shared library services being put in place.

[Note following the meeting: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting of 7 February 2011 at para. 13.3 report the property saving as being £135,053. This comprises not just the library but the total amount to run the building.]

<p>RESOLVED – That the report be noted.</p>
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43. UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Chair deferred this item to a future meeting.

44. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Residents' Housing Commission

Councillor Ginn asked why there were no councillors on the Residents' Housing Commission and said he thought there should be. A resident said the Commission was specifically set up as a resident-led group. There were three professional advisors were on the Commission so residents would be well supported.

Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader of the Council, said the new administration was committed to developing policy together with residents rather than just doing things to them. He noted the council had also supported the setting up of an independent, resident-led Commission to take a view on the proposed expansion of Heathrow for the council to consider when making its own submission to the national Airport Commission. Similarly, an independent Healthcare Commission led by Michael Mansfield QC had been set up to review A&E closures in west London.

Councillor Homan said discussions at the ERH&A PAC would feed into the Residents' Housing Commission and that there would be plenty of opportunity for councillors to discuss the Commission's recommendations in due course. It was important to trust the residents, who were already doing an excellent job in setting up a Tenants Conference for 7 March 2015.

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting.

Meeting started: 6.00 pm

Meeting ended: 9.18 pm

Chairman

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