

**London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
The Economy, Housing and the Arts Policy
and Accountability Committee
Minutes**



Tuesday 10 November 2020

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rory Vaughan (Chair), Rowan Ree, Ann Rosenberg, Helen Rowbottom and Adronie Alford

Other Councillors: Councillors Lisa Homan, Andrew Jones, Guy Vincent and Donald Johnson

Karen Galey – (Assistant Director for the Economy), Nicki Burgess – (Business and Enterprise Manager, the Economy), Sam Ridley – (Economic Development Officer High Streets and Markets), Shirley Cupit – (DCHU Chair / resident of the borough) Anthony Mason – (Independent Expert), Peter Bevington – (Independent Expert), Daniel Miller – (Resident Involvement & Service Improvement Manager), Mark Meehan (Chief Housing Officer) and Charles Francis (Committee Services)

Representatives from different several local business networks and representatives from the Defend Council Homes Unit

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Andrew Jones.

2. ROLL - CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

In relation to the actions of the July meeting, the Chair highlighted that he, and Councillor Rowan Ree had received *a copy of the Council's proposed response to the new Government Guidance on Housing Allocation for the Armed Forces*. The Chair asked for this to be circulated to all Committee members outside the meeting.

Councillor Ann Rosenberg confirmed that Prema Gurunathan – (Managing Director – Partnership for Growth and Innovation - LBHF & Imperial College) had not yet contacted her about broadband issues throughout the borough. The Clerk confirmed that this information would be sought outside the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September were agreed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair confirmed that several questions had been received from residents on transport matters and Highways officers would provide a written response to these in due course.

No public questions were received in advance on the Defend Council Homes Policy Consultation Update.

5. PROGRESS REPORT ON SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Karen Galey – (Assistant Director for the Economy) introduced the report, which provided details of the measures taken by the council’s business support team to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the borough’s small business community during the ongoing pandemic.

The Chair thanked Karen Galey for the overview and invited Councillor Guy Vincent (Local Business Champion) to address the committee. Councillor Guy Vincent highlighted the wide range of businesses operating within the borough and explained that he wished to place on record his thanks to those people that had been working so hard over the last nine months – the Business Rates Team (administering all the grant monies), the Business Support Team (working with business and across Council departments) and finally, the businesses themselves.

It was noted the borough had a very active community of businesses and Hammersmith and Fulham’s Business Network meetings had been taking place every two weeks (with between 20 and 30 business representatives attending each time). Councillor Guy Vincent explained that the Business Network was particularly valuable as it enabled businesses to let the Council know what its needs were, share ideas and enable businesses to support each other locally.

The Chair explained that several Business Network representatives were in attendance and he invited each of them in turn to relay their experiences of the action the Council had taken so far.

Patricia Bench of Hammersmith BID provided a summary of the actions the organisation took at the start of the pandemic, to ensure it had a sustainable model in place going forwards. These actions included attending Business Network meetings on a weekly basis, setting up virtual forums for those businesses it directly supported and liaison with other agencies such as the Police and TfL (as there were concerns about security / transportation and the possibility of civil unrest at the outset of the pandemic).

Hammersmith BID welcomed being part of the Council's Shop Local, Shop Safe campaign which played a large part in the BID's strategy to open up Hammersmith again (to ensure people felt safe to come back into Hammersmith and use retail again) when lockdown restrictions were eased. It was noted the Office sector had been slower to return than retail, but matters had accelerated after the schools returned.

Hammersmith BID had worked closely with the Council, especially Karen Galey's team on the Your Space / Our Space aspects and the Council had been particularly helpful in fast tracking the permissions businesses required to operate legally. Other welcome actions included the reinstatement of the video screen in Lyric Square which had given residents a semblance of normality.

Hammersmith BID welcomed the new round of grant funding which would be far more tailored towards Hammersmith businesses and working with the Council to ensure further funding opportunities were disseminated across the borough. Details were provided on the Privilege Card and how the use of this had been repurposed when the Hammersmith reopened, to warn people of how the heart of Hammersmith was now operating (with social distancing measures and new cycle lanes). Patricia Bench underlined how important it was for businesses to be quick and pivotal throughout the pandemic and highlighted the role social media and digital forums had played.

Vi Chu, Landsec, Centre Director for W12 Shopping Centre in Shepherd's Bush provided an overview of the shopping centre's retail units, operations and furlough arrangements during the first lockdown. Vi Chu thanked Councillor Vincent and the Council's Business Continuity Team for the assistance the Business Network had provided to the shopping centre by providing social distancing / hand washing guidance and signage to enable businesses to operate safely.

Vi Chu highlighted that he had worked in partnership with Hammersmith BID and the shopping centre had been used as an official food bank collection point during the first lockdown and would continue to do so as the country entered the second lockdown period. It was noted that Pizza Express (on the periphery of the shopping centre) had benefited from the Your Space, Our Space protocols and Vi Chu praised the Shop Safe, Shop Local campaign the Council had devised. Concluding his remarks, Vi Chu confirmed that due to the assistance he had received, the shopping centre was currently operating at 60% of its normal operating capacity.

Sarah King, from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) provided an overview of how the FSBs activities had evolved over time. She confirmed the Business Task Force, led by Councillor Vincent, and assisted by Council officers had played a significant role in bringing business partnerships and communities together throughout the lockdown. She confirmed the Council's Shop Safe, Shop Local campaign, with its distinctive rainbow colouring, was one of the first of its kind in the capital and had now been emulated by several Authorities across London.

Sarah King confirmed the weekly FSB bite-sized newsletter was used to tell businesses about Council initiatives, the available grants and it was also used to encourage businesses to sign up to the Council's newsletter so that information could be easily shared across parties. Closing her remarks, Sarah King thanked the

Council for its work in supporting businesses and the self-employed within the borough.

Councillor Andrew Jones echoed the sentiments which had been expressed previously and thanked officers, partners, the BID and the FSB for their hard work. Councillor Andrew Jones confirmed that during the first lockdown, the council had engaged with more businesses than it ever had before, and the Business Networks had enabled the Economy Team to provide an agile response to the pandemic. Officers were praised for their work in disseminating the various grant funding. Given the new business partnerships and networks that had developed in the first lockdown, Councillor Andrew Jones confirmed that the Council was well placed to support businesses, maintain employment and assist businesses to thrive in these challenging times.

Councillor Rowan Ree asked what powers the Council had to enforce face mask wearing in public. Drawing on his retail experience, Vi Chu explained that businesses had no powers to enforce mask wearing and only the Police could do this. However, as their resources were overstretched, he had found the best way, was to politely remind the public in person (when shopping) and by using the shopping centre's PA system. He highlighted that matters had not been helped by the governments' confusing guidelines in the first lockdown which had permitted shop staff not to wear masks.

Councillor Guy Vincent commented that as a result of complaints he had received, the Environmental Health Enforcement Team had visited over 100 hairdressers and barbers across the borough to ensure they were operating safely. And in terms of face masks, he reiterated that education and gentle enforcement were the preferred option. He highlighted that Councillor Ben Coleman had written to local supermarkets to encourage them to do as much as they could to protect the public and their own employees.

Councillor Donald Johnson thanked officers and Councillors for their efforts in shoring up confidence in the business community. Pointing to the officer report and the contraction of the business community, including the 5000 job losses, he asked what steps were being taken by the Council (especially in the low carbon sector) to encourage people to get back into the economy and businesses up and running again. He also asked for comments on the establishment of a green economy.

In response, Councillor Andrew Jones confirmed that the green economy was a central theme of the council's Industrial Strategy but in terms of the statistics raised in the report, more work was required to drill down into these. Hammersmith's green economy was different to that of outer London boroughs, as it tended to focus on biotech starts ups and the Green Knowledge economy. Councillor Andrew Jones confirmed the green economy was not about doing less, but supporting businesses to innovate.

Karen Galey confirmed that the projections in the officer's report were taken from work which had been commissioned in May from Oxford Economics, as part of the West London Alliance. Comments were provided on the scale of the contraction and Karen Galey confirmed it would be beneficial if this was revisited in the future. Details were

provided on the 15-minute neighbourhoods concept, including shopping locally and the tie-in with the green agenda. Concluding, she confirmed the Council was well placed in its green starts up and scale up with its partnership with Imperial to drive these forwards.

Councillor Guy Vincent explained how the Business Networks concept had originated and confirmed that the green agenda would be taken forwards with businesses when the future of high streets was discussed. He provided details of the parcels not pollution initiative which had been launched by Hammersmith BID and encouraged the attendees of the meeting to use the service for their Christmas shopping.

Councillor Donald Johnson stated it was important the Council continued to support local homeworking infrastructures which underpinned people's ability to work from home at present and for the foreseeable future. Asking several supplementary questions, Councillor Donald Johnson enquired about empty buildings, in terms of rental / deposit defaults and whether there was an appetite for landlords to sell these off. And finally, Councillor Donald Johnson asked whether the Council had any plans to emulate Westminster Council whom had chosen to purchase table and seating at wholesale prices to provide additional socially distanced capacity for hospitality venues?

In response, Karen Galey confirmed that Hammersmith and Fulham had one of the largest rates of working from home of the west London boroughs due to residents either being in managerial or highly skilled occupations which made the borough more resilient due to people's working patterns. In relation to the empty buildings, Karen Galey confirmed that officers were currently looking creatively and innovatively at ways these could be repurposed in the future. Commenting on the tables and chairs issue, Councillor Guy Vincent confirmed the Council had not explored this as the borough did not have a Soho-type mass area which businesses could populate. However, as a final observation, he stated that the Your Space, Our Space initiative had been successful, as residents and businesses appreciated this was a symbiotic relationship.

Patricia Bench explained how the BID process operated and confirmed that should Hammersmith BID be re-elected in February 2021, it intended to pilot 15 minute neighbourhoods and prior to Christmas, would be introducing the 'Parcels to Home' delivery service (by bicycle), as part of Bids green agenda to help reduce the number of local car journeys.

Councillor Helen Rowbottom referenced the statistics relating to businesses in the report and asked Karen Galey if officers could have a 'covid-watch' on those areas which were most vulnerable (by sector, size and the gross value added¹ output of that segmentation). Asking a supplementary question, she enquired what officers thoughts were on office space in the borough given the significant downturn in its use and the ramifications this was having on the local economy. In response, Karen Galey confirmed the Council would be conducting a survey of the borough top 100 Businesses to gauge what their new working practices were. Karen Galey acknowledged that culture and the arts had been particularly badly affected and with

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva>

the new round of government grants, the council would be revisiting those businesses which had fallen through the cracks with the latest funding opportunities. Clearly businesses needed funding as soon as possible, but Karen Galey confirmed that the Council would be looking at quick wins first such as assisting the Arts and Culture sectors. Moving forwards, Councillor Rowbottom suggested it would be useful if a matrix was produced which tracked how businesses were operating and responding, so the committee could see if this was in line with the Oxford Economic projections. She also suggested that the committee might revisit office space in a year's time when the picture became clearer.

Action: That officers provide an update report in a year's time covering how businesses had responded to the pandemic, as well as office space usage in the borough.

Councillor Adronie Alford commented that certain businesses were not taking track and trace details down as they did not feel it was their responsibility and she asked what the Council was doing about it. As well as the Enforcement Team, Councillor Guy Vincent confirmed the council had distributed posters to all the shops in the borough (to display in their windows) which detailed what all the current legal requirements were including track and trace. If premises were flouting the rules, Councillor Vincent encouraged fellow Councillors to contact him or the Environmental Health Team, who would talk to and educate businesses accordingly. Councillor Guy Vincent suggested it was likely that businesses were not adhering to guidance in some cases as these were changing rapidly and non-compliance stemmed from ignorance.

Councillor Ann Rosenberg noted that disposable masks were being distributed at the entrance to some supermarkets for customers which had forgotten their masks. She asked whether the council might purchase some masks and donate these to small businesses to remind them that this is what they ought to be doing. In response, Karen Galey confirmed that some limited European funding meant this might be possible on a limited scale.

The Chair asked what the net impact had been of more people working from home and therefore shopping locally, as compared to businesses not being open and retail not operating normally overall. In response, Karen Galey commented on how the Council had used the pandemic and shopping locally to support Hammersmith's small and independent sector and focus on the 15-minute neighbourhood locality. Councillor Andrew Jones provided his reflections on the Oxford report, 15-minute neighbourhoods, shopping locally and residents working from home. Further observations included the positive aspects of independent smaller businesses, the recovery of the hospitality sector and the high proportion of residents in the creative and knowledge industries. Councillor Guy Vincent commented that the local business economy had responded, and residents were shopping locally and supporting these businesses across the whole of the borough.

Summarising discussions, the Chair confirmed the Committee applauded many of the initiatives which had been discussed and were encouraged by the feedback the Business Network representatives had provided on the assistance they had received from the Council. Looking forwards, the Committee noted the 15-minute neighbourhood concept, shop safe / shop local, as well as several years of cross

organisational learning which had been achieved in such a short space of time. As a final remark, the Chair thanked all the participants for their hard work and contributions to the local economy and confirmed that committee would revisit some of the themes explored during the meeting at a future committee meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the report.

6. DEFEND COUNCIL HOMES POLICY CONSULTATION UPDATE

Councillor Lisa Homan, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, provided the context of the Defend Council Homes Policy and summarised the work which had been conducted in the past year. It was noted that resident involvement and engagement had developed significantly since 2014, and despite the consultation for Defend Council Homes falling within the pandemic, over a thousand residents had responded to the online consultation. Councillor Lisa Homan thanked officers and the Defend Council Homes Unit for all their hard work and the comprehensive consultation that was conducted.

Shirley Cupit, Defend Council Homes Unit Chair, explained that a joint presentation would be provided by Daniel Miller, Resident Involvement & Service Improvement Manager and herself. The presentation outlined what the Defend Council Homes Policy was and provided details on the recent consultation with council housing residents. The video that was used as part of the consultation process with residents was also shown at the meeting.

The Chair thanked Shirley Cupit and Daniel Miller for the presentations / video and invited Councillor Lisa Homan to comment. Lisa Homan confirmed it was extremely timely the DCH policy consultation update had come to PAC so any comments it did have could be incorporated into the final report to be considered by Cabinet in January 2021.

Councillor Rowan Ree noted that the last policy was unable to proceed due to changes in Government policy. With the Developers Charter legislation on the horizon, he asked whether the DCH policy would be able to operate effectively. In response, Councillor Lisa Homan confirmed that the DCH policy should work because it was based on good practice and on redevelopment rather than for a major planning application. However, it was essential that the DCH Policy was endorsed before these governmental changes.

Councillor Adronie Alford asked how much it was going to cost to amend the land register and what would the implications be for leaseholders wishing to sell their homes. In response, Shirley Cupit confirmed the cost implications were currently under review and an answer could not be provided at the present time. In relation to the second point, leaseholders and right to buy would not be affected in any way. Mark Meehan, Chief Housing Officer confirmed that discussions were on going with the Land Registry, but the cost implications of the DCH Policy would be included in the

Cabinet report. Councillor Lisa Homan confirmed that with regards to leaseholders, the scheme would afford them greater protection and so would be a positive move.

With regards to the Land Registry, Councillor Adronie Alford asked how the DCH Policy would work and whether this would be an individual property or estate restriction on title, Mark Meehan confirmed that legal negotiations were ongoing, and he would provide Councillor Adronie Alford with further information outside the meeting.

Action: That Mark Meehan provide Councillor Adronie Alford with further information relating to the legal negotiations surrounding the Land Registry.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Flynn, resident in attendance asked several questions. Firstly, in relation to the consultation figures, Mr Flynn confirmed that he had calculated the consultation responses were greater than 1000. In response, Daniel Miller confirmed that the consultation platform used by the Council (Common Place) automatically generated the response statistics and this anomaly was something he would need to investigate. Secondly, Mr Flynn asked Shirley Cupit what the implications were for leaseholders, if the landlord decided to make changes and whether this would prompt a large legal battle. In response, Anthony Mason, DCHU, Independent Expert, confirmed that where the Council was the leaseholder, two of the three legal provisions that underpin the policy would still apply and but the restriction on title would not apply (as the Council did not own the freehold title).

Shirley Cupit thanked the Resident Involvement Team and key Housing officers for their assistance and confirmed the Defend Council Homes Policy was a really positive example of residents working with the Council. The Chair welcomed the large number of responses to the consultation which illustrated that residents had really engaged with it. The Committee noted that respondents were very positive about the DCH proposal and strongly supported it moving forwards.

In relation to the DCH Policy, the Chair asked what a redevelopment proposal meant. In response, Peter Bevington, DCH, Independent Expert, confirmed that a definition of redevelopment had been included at the start of the policy and pertained to loss of a resident's homes through being demolished, rebuilt or in the loss of amenities such as green space or other community facilities.

Marilyn Mackie, resident, remarked that the Defend Council Homes proposals had been developed by residents and she thanked officers and the Defend Council Homes Unit for what had been had accomplished - preventing redevelopment without good practice consultation first having taken place.

Summing up the discussions, the Chair thanked everyone in attendance for their contributions in devising such a thorough Defend Council Homes policy. He reiterated it was important that residents were fully engaged with any future proposals to redevelop their properties. He hoped the policy would be endorsed and implemented by Cabinet following the January 2021 Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the report.

The Committee endorsed the Defend Council Homes Policy report to Cabinet.

Meeting started: 6.30 pm

Meeting ended: 8.34 pm

Chair

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