

Decisions of the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 March 2013

Members Present:-

Councillor Hugh Rayner (Chairman)
Councillor Brian Salinger (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Maureen Braun	Councillor Alison Moore
Councillor Jack Cohen	Councillor Rowan Quigley Turner
Councillor Brian Gordon	Councillor Alan Schneiderman (In place of Barry Rawlings)
Councillor Kath McGuirk	

Also in attendance

Councillor Joanna Tambourides - Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services
Councillor David Longstaff – Cabinet Member for Safety & Resident Engagement

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Barry Rawlings Councillor Andrew Strongolou

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2013 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence had been received from:

- Cllr. Barry Rawlings (who was substituted for by Cllr. Alan Schneiderman)
- Cllr. Andrew Strongolou

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Member	Subject	Interest Declared
Councillor Brian Salinger	Agenda Item 8 – Town Centre Strategies for Chipping Barnet and Edgware	Personal but non-prejudicial interest by virtue of being a Trustee of the Jesus House.
Councillor Hugh Rayner	Agenda Item 8 – Town Centre Strategies for Chipping Barnet and Edgware	Personal but non-prejudicial interest by virtue of living adjacent to the Edgware Town Centre.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (IF ANY)

None.

5. MEMBERS' ITEMS

None.

6. ANY MATTERS REFERRED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO KEY DECISIONS MADE BY:

None.

7. COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION

None.

8. TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIES FOR CHIPPING BARNET AND EDGWARE

Councillor Joanna Tambourides, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, and Martin Cowie, the Assistant Director of Regeneration and Strategy Planning introduced a report that outlined the Town Centre Strategies for Edgware and Chipping Barnet.

Edgware Town Centre Strategy:

The Committee considered the Edgware Town Centre Strategy report, which gave an update on the development of the Town Centre Strategies in advance of formal approval by Cabinet in June 2013. Mr. Cowie advised the Committee that the Strategy aimed to enable infrastructure improvement through development of the town centre and the Broadwalk Shopping Centre. The Committee were advised that the owners of the Broadwalk Shopping Centre, Scottish Widows, were keen to consider expansion of the centre, including ways to improve the Station Road interchange outside of the Broadwalk Shopping Centre.

The Committee were informed that Town Centre Strategy had been revised following consultation with traders. The Committee noted that the information gathered had included discussions with Transport for London in relation to the Edgware Underground Station and Bus Station, as well as the owners of the Broadwalk Shopping Centre.

The Chairman questioned how many responses had been received from residents following consultation on the scheme. Mr. Cowie advised that he would provide this information outside of the Committee.

Members commented on the importance of rent and parking on the success of town centres. A Member noted that these issues had not been referred to in the report.

The Chairman advised the Committee that he had received a comment from Cllr. Helena Hart, a Ward Member for Edgware, regarding the Edgware Town Strategy. She had emphasised the importance of maintaining and increasing the quality and number of shops in the town centre.

A Member noted that there was no longer a cinema in Edgware and advised that it was important to embrace the evening retail experience together with eating out to ensure the success of the town centre. The Committee stressed the importance of good quality shops to ensure the success of the high street.

Members voiced concern regarding the number of derelict buildings in the area, such as the Railway Hotel, and advised that action should be taken to bring these back into use.

Responding to questions from Members, Mr. Cowie advised that Officers had been in contact with Transport for London regarding operational and environmental issues relating to the town centre.

The Chairman outlined three factors that were important in attracting people to a town centre:

- 1) Security
- 2) A no-drinking area
- 3) Parking

Chipping Barnet Town Centre Strategy:

Mr. Cowie introduced the draft Chipping Barnet Town Centre Strategy, which went beyond the adopted Planning Framework in focusing on the wider issues facing the town centre including:

- Improving the mix of land uses, primarily for shops (at ground floor level) but also residential, leisure, employment and community uses;
- Improving public transport and pedestrian and cycle connections;
- Improving quality of buildings and public spaces;
- Promoting a safer and more secure environment;
- Creating a clear role for the town centre in respect of planned growth elsewhere such as at Brent Cross.

Mr. Cowie advised the Committee that the Council was in the process of consulting on the draft Town Centre Strategy which would run until 19 March 2013.

A Member commented on the importance of students and education staff in the area, and noted the amount of money that the group would bring to the area by spending.

A Member referred to parking charges in the area and advised that despite a reduction in parking charges, traders felt that more could be done. Councillor David Longstaff, the Cabinet Member for Safety and Resident Engagement, and Ward Member for High Barnet advised the Committee that free parking was being trialled.

Responding to a question from a Member about the level of consultation across the business community, the Cabinet Member for Safety and Resident Engagement advised the Committee that consultation had taken place and engaged the full breadth of businesses.

A Member noted the importance of communicating with Transport for London and stressed the importance of full engagement with elected Members.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1. The Committee note the updates on the Edgware Town Centre Strategy and the Chipping Barnet Town Centre Strategy.**

2. **The Committee request that the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Strategy Planning inform the Committee of the number of responses received from the Edgware consultation.**
3. **The Committee note the importance of engaging fully with the owners of shopping centres such as the Broadwalk Centre and The Spires Shopping Centre.**
4. **The Committee note the progress made in parking policy changes which had assisted in enabling vibrant town centres.**
5. **The Committee note the need for security in the redesign of town centres**
6. **That Committee note the need for action on derelict properties in Edgware and Chipping Barnet.**

9. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Councillor Brian Salinger, the Chairman of the Review of Effectiveness of Task and Finish Groups, introduced the Group's Final Report.

Councillor Salinger emphasised to the Committee that the Group had taken too long to complete its work and report its findings. He added that it was frequently difficult to co-ordinate Member's diaries in order to schedule a meeting. The Committee were advised that the work of Task and Finish Groups / Overview and Scrutiny Panels tended to be undertaken by a small minority of Members. Councillor Salinger advised the Committee that Task and Finish Groups have the potential to do good, but that they needed to be well supported corporately.

Councillor Salinger noted the importance of following up on recommendations made by Task and Finish Groups. Andrew Charlwood, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager advised the Committee that the Overview and Scrutiny Office provide the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee with updates at meetings, adding that it was a responsibility of Members to challenge to that information.

Anita Vukomanovic from the Overview and Scrutiny Office provided the Committee with an update on Recommendation Three of the Final Report, which provided that:

The Scrutiny Office be requested to deliver by the end of December 2012 the following initiatives to develop Scrutiny Member's skills and increase public awareness and participation in the Task and Finish Group Reviews:

- *Scrutiny Media Engagement Strategy; and*
- *Scrutiny Member Development Programme*

Media Engagement Project:

Ms. Vukomanovic advised the Committee that objective of the project was to improve corporate and public understanding of the work of Scrutiny and the Governance Service, and encourage participation in the democratic decision making process. The Committee were advised of the following:

- New website pages outlining the work of Overview and Scrutiny went live on the Barnet website in December 2012.
- Descriptions of the purpose of each of Barnet's Overview and Scrutiny Committees added to the website, in order to increase the awareness of the work of each Committee, and help to increase public engagement.
- A social media drive had taken place to promote committees and scrutiny working groups via Twitter and Facebook.
- Work had been undertaken to strengthen the relationship between corporate communications and scrutiny, and to increase awareness of the work of both Governance and Overview and Scrutiny for future publicity.
- Work had taken place with the Business Governance Team to increase the detail on the website of the work of other committees.

Scrutiny Member Development:

Ms. Vukomanovic advised that the following Member Development opportunities had taken place:

Centre for Public Scrutiny London Scrutiny Member Development Seminar: 17 October 2012

This was a London-wide Member Development event. In addition to other discussions, Members attended a choice of workshops including:

1. Engaging the local community in scrutiny.
2. Scrutiny of shared / cross-borough services.
3. Scrutiny of the commissioning process.

Barnet Members and officers assisted in facilitating the session on scrutiny of the commissioning process.

Implications of the Health and Social Care Act 2012:

The Scrutiny Office commissioned and held a session on 11 December 2012 which covered the implications on the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Members were briefed by an external, expert advisor from the Centre for Public Scrutiny on matters including:

- Changes affecting Scrutiny;
- The move from LINKs to Healthwatch; and
- Issues affecting the Health & Well Being Board

Scrutiny Skills:

On 8th January 2013, a three hour session took place for Members which focussed on Scrutiny Skills. An external expert advisor from the Centre for Public Scrutiny was commissioned to facilitate this session.

House of Commons Select Committee Training Programme:

A bespoke session to look at Scrutiny in Parliamentary Select Committees took place on 25 February 2013 in the House of Commons. Members were invited to attend a Barnet-only talk with Clive Betts MP, the Chair of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, and Glenn McKee, the Clerk to the Committee on 25th February 2013.

The session considered scrutiny within the Parliamentary process, scrutiny skills, and looked at ways in which Barnet Councillors could contribute to the Select Committee process and vice-versa. Members were then invited to watch a live Select Committee hearing to see the scrutiny skills that had been discussed on the day being used within the Parliamentary scrutiny context.

6) Forthcoming Overview and Scrutiny Member Development Events:

Ms. Vukomanovic advised the Committee that additional Scrutiny Member development events were being planned.

The Committee were advised that Members have been invited to attend a London wide seminar on 19 April 2013 called "Maximising the Impact of Overview and Scrutiny" and that Barnet Members would attending this session.

Ms. Vukomanovic also informed the Committee that Overview and Scrutiny were working to arrange a Member Development session on scrutiny on the Commissioning Council, as well as scrutiny specific session on Safeguarding.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) **The Committee note the findings and recommendations in the Final Report on the Effectiveness of Task and Finish Groups.**
- 2) **The Committee request that the findings and recommendations of the Final Report of the Effectiveness of Task and Finish Groups are forwarded to the Executive for their consideration.**
- 3) **The Committee request that an outline of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Office in relation to Recommendation Three is provided to Cabinet for consideration with the Final Report.**
- 4) **The Committee request that Party Whips are made aware of the Member's attendance to Overview and Scrutiny Member Development Sessions.**

10. BUSINESS MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that the Committee note the Forward Work Programme

11. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager outlined the status of the three current Task and Finish Groups / Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Road Safety Task and Finish Group:

The Committee were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Office had found it difficult to find a date when all Members were available. The Chairman advised that he would contact the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group to ensure that the work of the Group progressed.

Education Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

The Committee were informed that the Panel had collated its relevant evidence and would be formalising the recommendations shortly. The Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed the Committee that it was intended that the work of the Group would feed into an overarching Education Strategy for Barnet.

Children's Centres Task and Finish Group:

The Committee noted their previous decision to defer the start of the Children's Centres Task and Finish Group, in order to allow an external review to be completed in order to allow Members to utilise the information obtained from the review.

A Member commented that after the Education Strategy Task and Finish Group had completed its work, that there was an urgent need for a review of Early Years Provision.

RESOLVED that the Committee request that the Overview and Scrutiny Office add a review of Early Years Provision in the Borough to the list of potential Task and Finish Group review topics .

The meeting finished at 8.59 pm