

Decisions of the Housing and Growth Committee

14 September 2020

Members Present:-

Councillor Richard Cornelius (Chairman)
Councillor Sarah Wardle (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Sara Conway
Councillor Paul Edwards
Councillor Ross Houston
Councillor Kath McGuirk

Councillor Alex Prager
Councillor Thomas Smith
Councillor Daniel Thomas
Councillor Peter Zinkin

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Growth Committee held on 6 July 2020 be approved as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Houston declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Item 9 by virtue of being a Council appointed member of the Barnet Group Board.

Councillor McGuirk declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 7 and 8, by virtue of being an employee at John Lewis.

Councillor Wardle declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 10 by virtue of her employer acting on behalf of community fibre, however as the wayleave works do not favour one party over the other, the Councillor believes this to be a non-pecuniary interest.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

Mr Dix asked a supplementary question in relation to item 7.

Ms Thomas asked a supplementary question in relation to item 7 and item 8.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

7. ANNUAL REGENERATION REPORT UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Annual Regeneration report which updated the Committee on the current context for growth and regeneration, regeneration scheme challenges, scheme progress and scheme achievements.

Following consideration of the item, Councillor Conway put forward the following amendments to the officer's recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Houston.

That the Committee agrees to establish a multi-agency task force with a public health and resident-centred approach to regeneration and delivering services to our estates which will ensure sustained progress on improving health and wellbeing, environmental cleanliness and community safety. In the short-term the task force should:

- a. For Grahame Park: prioritise fixing the security doors, making dangerous pathways and pavements safe, and clearing up litter and fly-tipping
- b. For Grahame Park: ensure the Partnership Board meets regularly to discuss ongoing issues and action-plan
- c. For secure and non-secure tenants across estates: ensure the Committee receives an update at the next meeting on their status
- d. For West Hendon: ensure the Committee receives an update at the next meeting on the safety of the Marsh Drive building and decant date
- e. Ensure the Committee receives the report on dealing with estates and engagement that was agreed at a previous meeting

The Committee unanimously agreed to approve amendments a-e, in addition to the officer's recommendations as outlined in the report.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	

The Committee unanimously RESOLVED that:

- The Committee notes the 2019/20 Annual Regeneration report.
- That the Committee delegates authority to the Deputy Chief Executive to make any non-material changes to the attached Annual Regeneration Report.
- That the Committee agrees the following to be actioned by officers:
 - a. For Grahame Park: prioritise fixing the security doors, making dangerous pathways and pavements safe, and clearing up litter and fly-tipping
 - b. For Grahame Park: ensure the Partnership Board meets regularly to discuss ongoing issues and action-plan
 - c. For secure and non-secure tenants across estates: ensure the Committee receives an update at the next meeting on their status
 - d. For West Hendon: ensure the Committee receives an update at the next meeting on the safety of the Marsh Drive building and decant date
 - e. Ensure the Committee receives the report on dealing with estates and engagement that was agreed at a previous meeting.

8. BRENT CROSS CRICKLEWOOD UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the report which provided an update on the Brent Cross Regeneration Scheme since the Committee meeting on the 6th July.

In relation to recommendation 4 of the report, Members requested that the Committee were provided with a time-line as to how long the Council had before the further funding was required for the GRIP 3 design stage. Members asked that officers provide information on sources of funding that could be used.

Following discussion Councillor Houston moved an amendment to the recommendations as follows, 'That the Council should lobby the Government to secure the passive provision funding of £1.4m in time for the relevant design stage', which was seconded by the Leader.

The Committee unanimously agreed the amendment to the recommendation.

The Chairman moved to vote on the recommendations as outlined in the report, including Councillor Houston's additional recommendation.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

The Committee unanimously RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Committee noted the progress update across the scheme since the last report to the committee on 6 July 2020;
- 2) That the Committee delegated authority to the Finance Director to finalise the heads of terms and legal agreements with BXS JVLP in relation to plot 25 as set out in paragraph 1.18 of this report acting in the best interests of the council.
- 3) That the Committee authorised the Deputy Chief Executive to procure the necessary resources to co-ordinate construction logistics and security arrangements across the regeneration area as explained in paragraphs 1.43 of this report.
- 4) That the Committee noted the council has progressed the WLO design integration study to Network Rail GRIP 3 design stage and that further funding is required to continue the design and physical works at this time as explained in paragraph 1.33 to 1.39 of this report.
- 5) That the Committee agreed that the Council should lobby Government to secure the passive provision funding of £1.4m in time for the relevant design stage.

9. FIRE SAFETY - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the report which provided an update of the progress made since January 2019 with the Council's response to the Grenfell Tower fire disaster, including the delivery of the programme to replace at risk cladding, as well as related improvements to fire safety across Council blocks as instructed by the Committee. The report also provided an update on completed reviews of all other housing stock considered as potentially at risk.

Members asked officers whether the government was moving towards a conclusion on the programme to replace at risk cladding. The Deputy Chief Executive said that officers could not speak on behalf of the government, but could provide an update on the position in Barnet. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that all buildings in the borough that had cladding had now been replaced. The Council was still resolving disputes with managers and builders where agreement had not yet been reached and were working closely with MHCLG, to ensure Barnet used the powers sitting within the environmental health team to progress the programme as quickly as possible.

Councillor Edwards put forward a motion to add the following amendment to the recommendations 'That the Committee Lobbies Government to give a commitment to fund cladding works where there is no agreement to do this, for example in some housing association and private blocks, to ensure residents are safe and have certainty about their homes'.

The Chairman recommended that the Leader be asked to Lobby the Government, rather than the Committee, as this was something that would be done at a political level and would be more effective. The Committee agreed.

Councillor Houston asked that the Committee receive an update on the result of the bidding for funding from the government building safety fund. He also asked that officers urgently chased those landlords, where information was still outstanding, as a matter of urgency. The Chairman agreed.

Following further discussion on the report, the Chairman moved to vote on the officer's recommendations outlined in the report.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

The Committee unanimously RESOLVED that:

1. The Committee noted the progress to date with high priority fire safety works and the actions of Barnet Homes to ensure the safety of residents.
2. The Committee noted the progress in relation to properties directly owned by Registered Providers, and also that a few particular sites require ongoing monitoring of negotiations to resolve liability and responsibilities where this has been less clear; the priority remains to ensure the safety of residents.
3. The Committee noted ongoing work to identify fire risk within the private sector stock and the currently limited response to fire safety information requests from several landowners. It also notes the request from the Minister for Fire Safety to review current enforcement activities and potentially take further action as appropriate.

10. ENABLING INVESTMENT IN DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Assistant Director of Growth introduced the report which proposed an approach to working with broadband service providers to accelerate investment in high speed digital infrastructure across the borough and improve the opportunity to roll out 5G for residents and business. The proposed approach involves the development of a wayleave framework agreement, replacing the numerous and individually negotiated wayleaves that currently need to be agreed before any installation of new fibre infrastructure can take place. The approach would directly help address barriers to digital inclusion, enable job creation, boost economic resilience and improve access to online services.

Councillor Conway requested more detailed work be carried out on digital inclusion and asked that conversations take place with the organisations that had raised this as an issue with Members. Councillor Conway also asked that officers considered interim measures for the next 6 months, in case of a second lockdown, to ensure those in need could access the internet. The Deputy Chief Executive agreed that work to improve digital inclusion would continue and also highlighted that the Adult Social Care team had been very active in giving their older clients access support through the internet, giving those who might be socially isolated, access to the internet and teaching them how to use it.

Following discussion of the item the Chairman moved to the vote on the officer's recommendations.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

The Committee unanimously RESOLVED that:

1. The Committee noted the ongoing work to remove barriers to investment in improved digital connectivity and to support digital inclusion; and confirms support for the principles set out in paragraph 1.11 that will inform the detailed legal arrangements and implementation of improved broadband infrastructure.
2. The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Growth to finalise the terms of and enter into overarching commercial agreements for the implementation of improved broadband infrastructure.
3. The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Growth to finalise the terms of and enter into individual wayleave agreements with operators for the implementation of improved broadband infrastructure.

11. POST-DECISION SCRUTINY - RENT RELIEF POLICY DPR

The Chairman introduced the report which outlined the rent relief policy that had been introduced in response to the pandemic and authorised via delegated powers report in consultation with the Chairman of the Housing and Growth Committee. In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Urgency Committee on the 27th April 2020 provided delegation to Chief Officers (in consultation with the relevant Committee Chairmen) to take decisions on business-critical matters normally reserved to theme committees. The Committee resolved that any and all such decisions taken, including his one, would be reported back to the Committee for post-decision scrutiny.

Councillor McGuirk moved an amendment to the officer's recommendations outlined in the report as follows,

1. That the Committee receives a report at the next meeting on the actual situation in our high streets for local businesses.
2. That the Committee agrees to allow officers to extend rent relief on a case by case basis, if needed, to sustain tenancies
3. That the Council's approach to rent relief forms a continuous part of the town centre strategy and recovery planning.'

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to add the following recommendations:

1. That the Committee receives an update at the next meeting on the actual situation in local high streets for local business.
2. That the Committee notes that officers have the power to extend the rent relief on a case by case basis, if needed, to sustain tenancies.

The Chairman then moved to vote on the officer's recommendations as outlined in the report, including the additional agreed recommendations.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

The Committee unanimously RESOLVED:

- 1. To note the decisions taken by Chief Officers via delegated powers in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic or related matters.
- 2. That the Committee receives an update at the next meeting on the actual situation in local high streets for local business.
- 3.. That the Committee noted that officers have the power to extend the rent relief on a case by case basis, if needed, to sustain tenancies.

12. RECOVERY PLAN

The Chairman introduced the recovery plan report which provided an update on progress across a number of core themes under the workstream: Town Centres; Employment and Skills and Homelessness.

Councillor Houston put forward a number of amendments to be added to the recommendations.

1. That the Committee receives a report at its next meeting updating on rough sleeping
2. That the Committee lobbies Government to ensure the ban on evictions during the pandemic continues except when proven anti-social behaviour or in cases of domestic abuse when the perpetrator is a co-tenant.
3. That the Committee considers using CiL funding to increase cycle hangars - as other Boroughs like Camden have done
4. That the Committee instructs officers to meet with local businesses to work out what they need to get them through a second lock-down, and ensure they discuss business rates and rent relief, and what grants/support are available to help keep them going, and report back to Committee
5. That the Committee instructs officers to identify where the opportunities for growth are for our Town Centres and engage with local businesses and stakeholder groups like the North Finchley Partnership Board to plan what actions are needed.
6. That the Committee engage with the local faith and community groups, and volunteers that normally run the winter night shelter together to develop an alternative plan for support this winter.
7. That the Committee receives a briefing by email before the next meeting on the impact to Barnet of the Government's 'Planning for the Future' document
8. That the Committee requests that Policy & Resources Committee submits a robust response to the Government's 'Planning for the Future' consultation which should raise Barnet's concerns about the proposals.

Following discussion of these amendments the committee unanimously agreed the following:

1. To receive an update on rough sleeping at the next meeting, which would be contained within the recovery plan report.
2. That the Committee receives a report on the ban on evictions during the pandemic, which would include information about good practice observed by social housing providers in Barnet and that if lobbying was appropriate, the Committee could discuss alongside the paper the best way forward.
3. That the Committee recommends the Area Committee and Environment Committee consider using CIL funding to increase cycle hangers, although the Committee noted this was not for the remit of the Housing and Growth Committee and no formal referral could take place.

4. That the Committee noted that officers are meeting with local business to work out what they need to get them through a second lock-down and that an update on this would be provided within the recovery plan report.
5. That the recovery report would include an identification of opportunities for growth within Town Centres.
6. That the Committee noted that engagement with local faith and community groups was happening and that the Council would work with volunteers that normally run the winter night shelters and that an update on this work would be highlighted in the recovery plan report.
7. The Leader agreed for the report on the impact to Barnet of the Government's 'Planning for the Future' document to be shared with the Committee.
8. That the Committee noted that the Leader had raised Barnet's concerns around the context of the some of the proposals within the 'Planning for the Future' consultation and that the government were listening and taking into consideration all concerns raised by Councils.

The Chairman then moved to vote on the recommendations as outlined in the report, in addition to the amendments.

The votes were recorded as follows:

For	10
Against	0
Abstain	0

The Committee unanimously RESOLVED:

1. The Committee noted the report, including the proposed expenditure of approved funds on support measures for town centres, as summarised in paragraph 5.2.
2. That the Committee receives an update on rough sleeping at the next meeting, which would be contained within the recovery plan report.
3. That the Committee receives a report on the ban on evictions during the pandemic, which would include information about good practice observed by social housing providers in Barnet and that if lobbying was appropriate, the Committee could discuss alongside the paper the best way forward.
4. That the Committee recommends the Area Committee and Environment Committee consider using CIL funding to increase cycle hangers, although the Committee noted this was not for the remit of the Housing and Growth Committee and no formal referral could take place.
5. That the Committee noted that officers are meeting with local business to work out what they need to get them through a second lock-down and that an update on this would be provided within the recovery plan report.
6. That the recovery report would include an identification of opportunities for growth within Town Centres.
7. That the Committee noted that engagement with local faith and community groups was happening and that the Council would work with volunteers that normally run the winter night shelters and that an update on this work would be highlighted in the recovery plan report.
8. The Leader agreed for the report on the impact to Barnet of the Government's 'Planning for the Future' document to be shared with the Committee.
9. That the Committee noted that the Leader had raised Barnet's concerns around the context of the some of the proposals within the 'Planning for the Future' consultation and that the government were listening and taking into consideration all concerns raised by Councils.

13. COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

14. ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

None.

The meeting finished at 20.32.