

# MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 9 November 2022  
(7:00 - 9:13 pm)

**Present:** Cllr Glenda Paddle (Chair), Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah (Deputy Chair), Cllr Fatuma Nalule, Cllr Ingrid Robinson, Cllr Paul Robinson and Cllr Muazzam Sandhu; Glenda Spencer, Sajjad Ali and Richard Hopkins

**Apologies:** Cllr Andrew Achilleos, Cllr Donna Lumsden, Cllr Phil Waker, Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf and Sarfraz Akram

## 11. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

## 12. Minutes (5 October 2022)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2022 were confirmed as correct.

## 13. Housing Regeneration

The Chief Planner (CP) at Be First delivered a presentation on Housing Regeneration, which detailed:

- Be First's key strands of work;
- The number of new homes consented since April 2019;
- The number of new homes delivered since April 2019;
- The pipeline of delivery in the Borough until 2037; and
- The programmes of work within the Council and Be First's pipeline until 2027.

In response to questions from Members, the CP and the Strategic Director Inclusive Growth (SDIG) stated that:

- "Turnkey" properties related to those units acquired by Be First, that had been built by other developers, with the reason for this being that other developers could often build these units much more cheaply than Be First. It also helped with the viability in terms of bringing these schemes forward.
- As part of the planning negotiations and up until the application was presented at the Council's Planning Committee, discussions would be held around education, healthcare and transport infrastructure. Following the approval of the application, there would also be a Section 106 (S106) agreement attached to the approved planning permission, as well as the planning conditions, which were the legal obligations in terms of what the developer had committed to as part of the mitigations for the proposed development. Developers were also charged a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which could be used by the Council to support local infrastructure; however, there was a reduced fund in the Borough due to the high level of affordable housing, with developers not required to pay the CIL if they built such housing.

- With the Local Plan, the Council and Be First had an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which outlined the different types of infrastructure, such as cycle infrastructure and healthcare hubs. This document set the expectation of what would need to come forward as part of developments, to mitigate their effects.
- Part of the Council and Be First's placemaking strategy when they worked with new developers was to think about the design of the place, which looked at all of the infrastructure needed.
- Whilst the Council and Be First were waiting for clarification as to cladding and building regulations, their schemes were built to current planning and building control regulations. Building control had become tighter and the Council and Be First had a good relationship with the Fire Brigade.
- There was work being undertaken with Reside in terms of affordability, and in the current economic climate, in terms of viability. There were currently weekly meetings on this, where the Council and Reside were reviewing what was being built, the cost and understanding of what needed to be slowed down or paused. Several conversations had taken place with the Greater London Authority (GLA) around the Council receiving more grants for construction.
- Residents who were looking to move into Reside properties received an information pack; as part of this, they would be informed about parking arrangements and that they would be taking on these properties, without parking spaces. The SDIG would ensure that the Managing Director of Reside, brought an excerpt of this information provided as part of the residents' packs, to the 7 June 2023 Committee meeting, where Reside was to be discussed as part of the agenda. Going forward, residents would need to continue to be supported to understand these arrangements, especially for those moving into some of the newer properties.
- Following the meeting, the SDIG would provide the Committee with the information stated in the tenancy agreements, as to whether residents were agreeing to not have a car, or whether they were only being given this information about there not being the facility for this.
- In terms of the mix and the size of the units delivered, the Council's housing register requirements, the viability, planning policy and the need to have a mix of different sizes, were all taken into consideration when planning this. The Council and Be First were very conscious of the need to deliver 3 and 4-bedroom units, which was incorporated into the overall portfolio in terms of delivery. Whilst these units were predominantly flats, there was a mix of flats and houses, depending on the location of the development.
- Work was being undertaken around 'Homes for Everyone', reviewing the Council and Be First's housing tenure and mix, and what their accommodation looked like for different vulnerable groups, including the elderly and families with vulnerable children and young people. They were also working alongside the Adults, Children's and Health teams around vulnerable groups and how units were designed. Work was also being undertaken around smaller sites and what could be developed on these.
- The Mayor of London specified different planning policy targets for each London borough; the CP would share this information following the meeting. Whilst the Borough had not historically met this target, the number of schemes that had come to Planning Committee had hugely increased over the past 3 years, meaning that the Council was increasingly closer to meeting this target. As part of the emerging Local Plan, much work had

been undertaken around where development would be located to meet these targets; the Council and Be First now had a five-year housing plan outlining how it would meet these.

- In terms of climate change, work was currently being undertaken to ensure that the Council's emerging Local Plan met the London Plan, with the Council's plan going further in some cases. The Council was also working to consider how it could achieve 'gold plus standard' policies around climate change, through aspects such as net zero and biodiversity gains, with this work due to be completed by December 2022. In terms of tidal flooding, the Council had conducted flood risk assessments as part of the Local Plan, which had shaped the terms of schemes that could come forward. Once planning application was received, the onus would be on the applicant to demonstrate that they had looked at the flood risk in more detail and that they had mitigated the impacts of this, before the scheme was approved, such as through contributing to financial contributions towards improving flood defences or through designing schemes without basement level living spaces.
- In terms of parking, the Borough had to be in conformity with the Mayor's London Plan, which set maximum parking standards according to the land use. The London Mayor was very encouraging of reduced car usage, with the Council echoing this, which was the reason behind "car light" and "car-free" developments coming forward. As part of this, the Council was working hard to promote the transport and cycle infrastructure required, to ensure that residents had viable alternatives to using their cars, as well as working with neighbouring boroughs to join up infrastructure and approaches.
- Be First prided itself on high design quality. It had also set up a Design Board that critiqued major schemes, both of Be First and of third parties, which acted as a sounding board and was reported through to the Planning Committee. Be First also had a Design team, which ensured high design quality. The Council and Be First were very aware of the need for high quality provision that was also viable and worked hard to navigate this.
- In terms of sustainability, Be First was working with the Council on "Passivhaus" (buildings created to very high energy efficient design standards so that they sustained a mostly constant temperature all year round).
- In terms of parking, Transport for London (TfL) was very much involved in discussions and the Council worked to advocate for increased transport infrastructure and ensuring that developers contributed effectively, as well as worked with TfL proactively to build relationships with it.
- The SDIG would liaise with the Parking team around their plans for arrangements for individuals (for example, who were vulnerable and needed a car for transportation) and would respond to the Committee in due course.
- Whilst B&D Energy was still charging lower than other companies in terms of energy, there was work being undertaken with the company currently, looking at the long-term and what needed to be thought through as prices changed.
- There were requirements for buildings over a certain height to have lifts installed, in part to deal with fire safety; however, as part of any schemes put forward, such as for the elderly, the Council and Be First would consider who was using these as part of the design to ensure these were fit-for-

purpose.

- There was much work being undertaken around Community Hubs and Family Hubs, to consider infrastructure for young people, the elderly and families, as well as how to upskill residents and offer them additional support. A bid had also been placed to create a youth space in the Borough.

The Chair expressed her concern that more three and four-bedroom houses needed to be built, to better consider families going forward. She also stated that supermarkets needed to be better considered as part of local infrastructure, particularly for “car-free” developments, where residents may have lots of shopping to transport and where public transport may not be particularly reliable. The Committee also requested a breakdown of how many one, two and three-bed units had been built and their costs, expressing the difficulty in understanding the terminology employed and the likelihood of confusion, as what was “affordable” could be considered differently by different people. The Chair acknowledged the importance of the delivery of housing over the past three years, praising the dedication of all involved.

#### **14. Economic Infrastructure**

The Deputy Development Director (DDD) at Be First delivered a presentation on the economic infrastructure that was being delivered in the Borough, which detailed:

- The Be First mission, which was to accelerate regeneration in the Borough, so that no-one was left behind;
- The Transformation Areas and Aspiration Zones within the Borough, which had huge potential for growth and to provide opportunities for residents;
- Examples of regeneration within the Borough, which were creating jobs for residents, such as Dagenham East, Eastbrook Studios and Dagenham Dock;
- Examples of regeneration within the Borough, which had provided workspaces and event venues (such as the “Make It London” space), as well as artistry space and accommodation (such as the “House for Artists”);
- Future commercial-led mixed-use schemes, such as the Factory District;
- Future industrial schemes and concepts, including innovative stacked industrial units;
- The Good Food Economy Partnership, which would build a wider movement for good food that supported residents to grow, cook, eat, share and enjoy good food, as well as develop the reputation of Barking town centre as London’s new food destination;
- The Thames Freeport;
- The Barking Town Centre Regeneration Strategy 2020-2030;
- Plans to transform the Vicarage Field Shopping Centre into a mixed-use scheme, combining retail, education, health, food and drink and residential facilities;
- Barking Station improvement plans;
- The Food Hub, which would uplift Barking’s food and beverage offer; and
- The “levelling-up” bid for Dagenham Heathway.

The Head of Transport Infrastructure and Policy Planning (HTIPP) at Be First then delivered a presentation on the Transport Growth Programme, which outlined:

- How growth could be unlocked through transport, highlighting the positive impact of initiatives such as Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points, cycle training and improved bus lanes for the Borough;
- Key focus areas for growth, as set out in the Local Plan;
- Transport Priorities set out in the Local Plan;
- Key initiatives that had already been delivered, such as the Barking Riverside Overground Station and the Barking Riverside Pier;
- Plans for “levelling-up” bids in Dagenham Heathway and Barking Town Centre;
- Cycling improvements;
- Key safety schemes for delivery in 2023;
- Bus improvement priority schemes for 2023;
- Work to improve the Borough’s rail stations and connectivity;
- A13 junction improvement work; and
- Funding information for schemes and works planned.

In response to questions from Members, the HTIPP and the DDD stated that:

- Most of the complaints received around TfL related to bus delays; whilst there had not been a lot of complaints received about the level of service, the HTIPP encouraged Members to raise these with him where these did occur. The capacity and issues at Barking Station were currently on TfL’s risk list in terms of new infrastructure schemes that they needed to address, to improve the service at that station, which was the ninth busiest in the UK. Be First also wanted to continue to work with TfL to improve services in East London. The SDIG echoed that whilst East London had previously not received as good a transport offer as the rest of London, Be First and the Council would continue to push for better services, particularly as London was moving eastward. Whilst this was not directly within their control, they had much evidence through the census to confirm the changing demographics in the Borough and the importance of prioritising better East London services.
- TfL was not going to extend the cycle hire scheme that it ran in the centre of London (the Santander scheme) to outer London boroughs; as such, Be First and the Council were looking at whether it could hold its own scheme with other neighbouring boroughs. They would consider whether they could tender and procure this, so that residents could rent bikes and electric bikes.
- Lots of engagement work had been undertaken with schools, using the endowment money from the Film Studios; over the Summer 2022, 700 children and young people from local schools had visited the Studios to look at careers in the film industry. Lots of work was also being undertaken around the food sector, with local colleges and schools, to evidence the types of jobs available and show how young people could go into this industry.
- The Transformation Areas were located across the entire borough, to ensure that improvement and investment was spread out across this.
- There was lots of work being undertaken around the cost-of-living crisis and

warm spaces and were these were located in the Borough; this programme was already being delivered.

- Heathway road improvements would enable the road space to be safer to cycle on, ensure greater bus flow and ensure that the road was safer to cross for pedestrians.
- The Borough had poor levels of air quality and there was lots of work to be done around this; when the Council looked at economic infrastructure, it had a responsibility to consider air quality because of the implications, long-term health conditions and environmental damage associated with this. It aimed to do this in a way that improved outcomes for residents, which was part of the thinking around the “Healthy Streets” initiative.
- Be First was also undertaking work around the A13 and considering how best to divert traffic and ensure that lorry traffic did not impact on smaller streets within the Borough.
- The Good Food Economy was looking to promote healthy eating and create proper infrastructure for children, young people and families within the Borough. The Inclusive Growth and Be First teams were working closely with Public Health, as well as were bidding for additional funding around this work.
- In terms of low traffic neighbourhoods, the Council and Be First were going to focus their efforts on the Schools Streets programme; they were in the process of delivering an additional nine streets and they also had a large list of applications for schools streets to implement over the next two years. Out of £1.4 million, £200,000 of the Schools Streets funding would be put towards cameras and the technology to implement this, with the income generated from Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) able to part fund the schemes.

## **15. Work Programme**

The Chair informed the Committee of the following changes that had been made to the Work Programme since the last meeting, which was agreed by the Committee:

- The ‘Readiness for Children’s Social Care OFSTED inspection’ report, which was due to come to the 7 December Committee, would need to be postponed to the 8 March 2023 Committee, to align with updated timescales for this and with the timetabling for various Member groups.
- The 8 March 2023 Net Zero item would be held as a wider Member’s Briefing to accommodate the above change in timetabling, as well as to enable all 51 Councillors to attend this and learn more about the Council’s net zero initiatives.

It was discussed that going forward, some of the Committee’s items may be best delivered as Member’s Briefings, due to how busy the Committee was and to enable it to make best use of its time, as well as to enable specific items to be more informative, with all 51 Councillors able to learn about these.