

HOUSING, ECONOMY AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15 December 2015 at 7.30 pm

MEMBERS: Councillor Jayne McCoy (Chair), Councillor Nick Emmerson (Vice-Chair), Councillor David Bartolucci, Councillor Jean Crossby, Councillor Neil Garratt, Councillor David Hicks, Councillor Joyce Melican, Councillor Daniel Sangster and Councillor Amy Haldane
(Absent) Councillor Trish Fivey

23 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair, Councillor Jayne McCoy welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular those speaking to the petition.

24 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES**

No apologies were received.

25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

26 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2015**

RESOLVED: That the minutes are agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

27 **PETITION - HOMES FOR HEROES WALLINGTON**

The Committee considered the report regarding the petition submitted, the prayer of which reads as follows:

“We have been inspired by the DIY SOS TV programme that saw the renovation of homes to be used to house ex-servicemen and women. We, the undersigned would like to see a similar project in our area (London Borough of Sutton) to provide homes and a community for the ex-servicemen and women who have served our country selflessly and of whom we are so proud. We call on Sutton Council to look at sites and help us make this happen”.

The Chair invited the three lead petitioners, Jackie Beer, Chris Curtis and Terry Woolford along with the Surrey Poppy Appeal Co-ordinator Mandy Jenkins, to address the Committee.

Jackie Beer described the inspiration for the petition and the associated Facebook page and advised that offers have already been made for the supply of materials, manpower and services. She noted the preference for the project to be a refurbishment rather than a new build, as this would maximise community involvement. Mandy Jenkins supported this view, and stated that the DIY SOS

project had been successful because of the community's involvement which led to the ex-servicemen becoming integrated into the community.

Committee Members commended the project and asked a range of questions. In response, Jackie Beer described the aim to include a community hub, where therapy, support and training could be delivered. Mandy Jenkins added that residents will have a range of physical and mental needs and will get support from each other as well as from outside agencies and charities such as the British Legion.

Mandy Jenkins was unable to detail the charities that contributed funding towards the DIY SOS project, but could confirm that there was a range of charities that could be approached to support this project.

The Committee noted the need to find a suitable site, and Richmond Green was discussed as it had been initially suggested as a possibility. Terry Woolford explained that although Richmond Green has been suggested, all involved were happy to consider all options.

The Chair asked officers for their input. The Executive Head of Housing and Regeneration, Simon Latham, highlighted the importance of the drop-in/advice day in order to establish the level of demand for housing and other services. He noted the need to plan the day properly to ensure ex-service personnel are aware of it, and the appropriate people attended to give advice and support.

The Chair noted that the current housing allocations policy gives priority to ex-service personnel and suggested that awareness of that may be an issue to be addressed. Terry Woolford noted that although social media can be very useful, many people won't have access to it, so Mandy Jenkins had agreed to assist in publicising the drop-in day.

Councillor Jean Crossby suggested that homeless shelters and similar organisations could supply information about ex-service personnel, and Simon Latham explained that the rough sleeping network already recognises the need to establish links between homeless people and their home borough. He confirmed that LB Sutton are part of a network of agencies working with the homeless.

The Chair asked that the Committee be kept up to date with this project, with a formal report on progress to be brought to the June meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Housing, Economy and Business Committee

1. Agrees that the Council should facilitate a drop-in/housing advice day early in 2016, as detailed in paragraph 5.1
2. Agrees that officers continue to explore options to develop a deliverable scheme that meets the aims of the petitioners as far as possible and within Council priorities.
3. Agrees that officers should continue to keep petitioners involved in the

project.

28 **ECONOMY WATCH**

Joanne Cavey, Senior Project Manager - Matching Skills with Demand, delivered a presentation on the key headlines from the economic indicators for quarter two of the year (July to September 2015) and invited comments and questions.

The Committee discussed the drop in footfall in Sutton High Street, and the Head of Economic Renewal and Regeneration, Mandy Cherrington, confirmed that works have resumed at Times Square shopping centre. Councillor David Hicks noted that the Local Plan task and finish group had considered access routes to the town centre, and Mandy Cherrington undertook to supply data on the usage of the Times Square car park during the period.

Councillor Jean Crosby described her concern at the 84.3% rise in the cost of emergency accommodation, and asked if data was available on the reasons for people seeking emergency accommodation. The Head of Housing and Regeneration, Simon Latham, advised that the main reason is termination of shorthold tenancies, as landlords evict tenants in order seek to achieve higher rents. He also explained that there has been a shift across London from landlords leasing emergency accommodation properties to local authorities and housing authorities, to them charging a nightly rate, which is more costly.

Joanne Cavey undertook to ascertain the average time for the Department of Work and Pensions to assess a claim for universal credit, as well as the target they have in place for such assessments.

In response to the comments made by the Committee, the Chair asked that the Head of Revenues and Benefits bring an update report to the March meeting on the impact of the introduction of universal credit, housing benefit caps and the rate of applications for crisis loans.

29 **ANY URGENT BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DIRECTION OF THE CHAIR**

There were no urgent items raised.

30 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on 26 January 2016 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

Chair

Date