



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Housing, Finance and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Housing, Finance and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 30th July, 2018**, Room 3.6 and 3.7, 3rd Floor, 5 Strand, London, WC2 5HR.

Members Present: Councillors Melvyn Caplan (Chairman), Timothy Barnes, Richard Elcho, Adam Hug, Pancho Lewis, Guthrie McKie, Mark Shearer and James Spencer.

Also Present: Councillors Rachael Robathan, David Boothroyd, Andrea Mann, Patricia McAllister and Robert Rigby and Barbara Brownlee (Executive Director, Growth, Planning and Housing).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Councillors Tim Barnes and Guthrie McKie were replacing Councillors Antonia Cox and Matt Noble respectively.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 CALL-IN OF: EBURY BRIDGE ESTATE RENEWAL

- 3.1 The Chairman introduced the item and invited Councillor Adam Hug, a of the Member of the Committee who had requested the call-in of the Cabinet decisions made on 9 July in respect of the Ebury Bridge Estate Renewal report, to set out the reasons for the call-in.
- 3.2 Councillor Hug began by stating that a residents' ballot to determine their preferences should be held as this was desirable and would be beneficial for all. An earlier residents' ballot of Ebury Bridge Estate had been conducted a few years earlier and so there was no reason to not hold another one. Councillor Hug felt that the number of residents who had indicated support for the proposals in the consultation did not sufficiently demonstrate a clear mandate to proceed. He suggested that efforts should be made to obtain additional funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) and to make full use of opportunities on Council-owned land to maximise the social and

affordable housing element and help finance the best scheme possible. Councillor Hug felt that further clarity was needed concerning affordable housing and the priority of tackling overcrowding needed to be addressed by delivering the appropriate homes.

- 3.3 Another area Councillor Hug suggested needed more clarity was in respect of the Decant Strategy which he felt was currently too vague and it was important that residents were fully informed about the proposals. The Local Lettings Strategy also needed more detail, including how current residents would be given preferential treatment. Councillor Hug also stated that the delivery model had not sufficiently set out the role of the developer and every effort needed to be made to ensure that the Wholly Owned Housing Company was contributing as much as possible to the delivery of the scheme.
- 3.4 Councillor Pancho Lewis, who had also called-in the decisions, similarly supported the idea of a residents' ballot, especially as a previous one had been held at the site. Councillor Lewis acknowledged that although the proposals as they currently stood would lead to more affordable housing, he asserted that the proportion of affordable housing compared to market housing would actually reduce. He also commented that more details were required about the residents' engagement process.
- 3.5 Councillor Andrea Mann, a Ward Member, was then invited to address the Committee. She began by emphasising that both Councillor Shamim Talukder, another Ward Member, and herself, did not want to impede regeneration in area and would have supported the proposals if they had the majority support of residents. However, she felt that the report had not shown that there was clear majority support for the proposals and it was important that this be achieved, particularly as it involved demolishing properties and vulnerable people and children would be affected. Councillor Mann therefore felt that a residents' ballot was necessary to clarify whether there was majority support and she referred to a previous ballot at the site which had a turnout of 60% and showed support for regeneration in principle. Councillor Mann also felt that there should support from any proposals from residents who lived near the site who would be impacted by the demolition stage and so should be consulted. In respect of social housing, she acknowledged there would be more properties of this category, but she asserted that the proportion of social housing would reduce to 38% or even 34%. Councillor Mann emphasised that it was important not to allow the ratio of social housing to fall and she felt this matter needed to be re-considered and additional funding be pursued from the GLA. She concluded by stating that she would support residents' wishes and it was important to consider that their lives would change when Ebury Bridge Estate was redeveloped.
- 3.6 Rachel Reilly, a local resident, was invited to address the Committee. Rachel Reilly advised that she was Chair of the Ebury Bridge Residents' Association (EBRA) and also a member of the Ebury Bridge Community Futures Group (CFG). She explained that she was speaking on behalf of EBRA following requests from residents. The Committee heard that EBRA had undertaken two surveys, both of which had demonstrated that residents had not felt that the listen and engage phase had been undertaken satisfactorily, whilst a large

proportion had not been directly engaged by the Council. Those who had engaged had not felt they had been listened to. Rachel Reilly stated that the surveys determined that the majority of residents had not felt the preferred scenarios had been sufficiently explained to them and they did not support them. The Outline Business Case, which confirmed the viability of the preferred option, had not been accessible publically and many residents felt that the estate had been purposefully neglected. Members heard that the second survey had shown that the majority of residents did not see a future for themselves on the estate and that they had not know that there was a CFG in existence. Rachel Reilly concluded that by stating that although regeneration was absolutely necessary, the majority of residents did not support the proposed option 7 and so therefore a residents' ballot was desired

- 3.7 Teresa Wickham was then invited to address the Committee and confirmed that she is the Chairwoman of the CFG. Teresa Wickham advised that she had led CFG since February and this diverse group met every 2 weeks. Residents had been consulted through a series of events and workshops in the last year and 8 scenarios for the future of the Ebury Bridge Estate had been drawn up. She felt that options 6, 7 and 8 were all potentially viable. Teresa Wickham advised that she had highlighted repairs and maintenance works that were necessary on the estate to the Chief Executive of CityWest Homes, including faulty lifts and getting garage doors re-painted. The Committee heard that Teresa Wickham had been appointed the Chairwoman of CFG after a selection process involving an interview panel of 4 people, which included 2 local residents. The Chairwoman position was independent and unsalaried. Teresa Wickham felt that that there had been ample engagement and consultation with residents and CFG representatives were on site 7 days a week and stayed later on Wednesdays. Teresa Wickham advised that a Community Charter was in the process of being developed to ensure transparency. She concluded her submission by emphasising the importance of not delaying the scheme any longer and to proceed with its implementation.
- 3.8 In response to the issues raised, Councillor Rachael Robathan (Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Regeneration) advised that the Council had been working with the GLA for a while to explore the possibility of additional funding to provide more affordable housing. An application for funding from the GLA had been submitted in respect of the Church Street regeneration with all conditions met, however a response was awaited. Councillor Robathan advised that a proportion of GLA funding would be required to be delivered on a pan London-wide basis as part of GLA requirements and it was important that the needs of Ebury Bridge residents were met. The GLA also had tight guidelines in respect of the types of tenure that the funding could be used for. Councillor Robathan felt that there had been substantial consultation and the CFG played an important role in engaging with the community and the Council was also happy to engage with EBRA. The majority of respondents in the consultation were in support of the proposals and option 7.
- 3.9 Councillor Robathan advised that there were currently around 4,000 families on the housing waiting list and the Local Lettings Plan would assist in

addressing this. There was also a need to deliver more intermediate housing which was currently in low supply as well as social housing. The Council was committed to provide more affordable housing in Westminster and Ebury Bridge Estate was an important site in providing this. Councillor Robathan advised that the working of up the details for option 7 were in the process of being developed and the exact proportion of affordable housing allocation was yet to be determined, however the report mentioned the very minimum figure that would be provided. Option 7 would provide housing for families, those with special needs and older people and there would be green spaces. In respect of a residents' ballot, Councillor Robathan felt that ongoing consultation was a better way of identifying any support for schemes rather than a simple Yes/No ballot.

- 3.10 The Chairman then invited Members to discuss the item and began by asking for details in respect of the Decant Strategy. A Member commented that the Ebury Bridge Estate was in clear need of investment and improvement and he felt that the proposed scheme would achieve this, as well as addressing the housing shortage generally in Westminster. He also felt that there had been extensive consultation on the scheme. Another Member commented that the consultation response rate had been quite high, and the amount of unoccupied properties was also high. The number of housing units that could be brought into use was significant and would contribute to reducing the housing waiting list. He asked what alternatives could be proposed if option 7 was not pursued. It was also remarked that a reduction in the market housing offer would also result in less affordable housing as it would reduce the funding available. Members sought further details in respect of the affordable housing and market housing split. A Member commented that the consultation demonstrated that residents had been listened to and had been presented with choices and he acknowledged that further details were to follow and so felt that it was not appropriate to call-in the proposals at this stage.
- 3.11 Another Member commented that delivering regeneration schemes were always difficult for local authorities. However, he felt that in this particular instance, residents were not happy with the proposals and there should be greater effort to obtain more funding for the GLA through negotiation. In respect of affordable housing, he remarked that in reality this was not affordable for many people, including teachers and nurses. A Member sought further clarification as to reasons why a residents' ballot should not be held.
- 3.12 The Chairman acknowledged that more details would follow in respect of decant arrangements, whilst the social/intermediate/market housing proportions were being worked on. The Local Lettings Plan was also in the process of evolving. The Chairman felt reassured that every effort would be made to obtain more funding from the GLA if this was available to deliver for Westminster needs.
- 3.13 In reply to issues raised by Members, Barbara Brownlee (Executive Director, Growth, Planning and Housing) advised that anyone was welcome to join the CFG and discuss the Council's remit. She acknowledged that further details were required in respect of the Decant Strategy, however she assured Members that residents would be re-housed locally during this period.

Barbara Brownlee advised that every resident had the right to return to the estate and each case would be undertaken on an individual basis to best meet the needs of residents. Once the renewal stage was underway, the Council would then be in a position to present the options to residents. Barbara Brownlee welcomed open debate in respect of the delivery model and the Cabinet report in October would include progress on this.

- 3.14 Councillor Robathan concurred that any additional funding from the GLA must be available to address Westminster's specific housing needs. In respect of residents' ballots, she advised that the Council had been an early adopter of this, however it was felt that this was not as an effective way of identifying residents' views and needs as ongoing engagement, which provided constant feedback and increased the number of people engaging. Councillor Robathan added that there was always a risk that residents would disengage after a ballot, assuming that there would be no further opportunity to express their views.
- 3.15 The Chairman invited Councillor Hug for closing remarks. Councillor Hug began by stating that further consultation and a residents' ballot would open up opportunities for additional funding. He felt that any requirement by the GLA to deliver pan-London housing from its funding would be minimal and open to negotiation. He stated that GLA funding requirements also allowed for provision of more lower Council Tax band properties. Councillor Hug welcomed the prospect of more details in respect of the Decant Strategy and emphasised the need for ongoing support for families. Councillor Hug concluded his submission by requesting that the Cabinet consider holding a residents' ballot to re-affirm or otherwise support for the proposals.
- 3.16 The Committee then took this to the vote and voted by majority to endorse the decisions made by the Cabinet.

3.17 **RESOLVED:**

That the decisions made by the Cabinet on 9 July 2018 in respect of the Ebury Bridge Estate Renewal be endorsed.

The Meeting ended at 8.17 pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____